Mary K. Baxter

met dr. T.L. Lowery



Die Krag van die Bloed

Genesing vir Jou Gees, Siel en Liggaam

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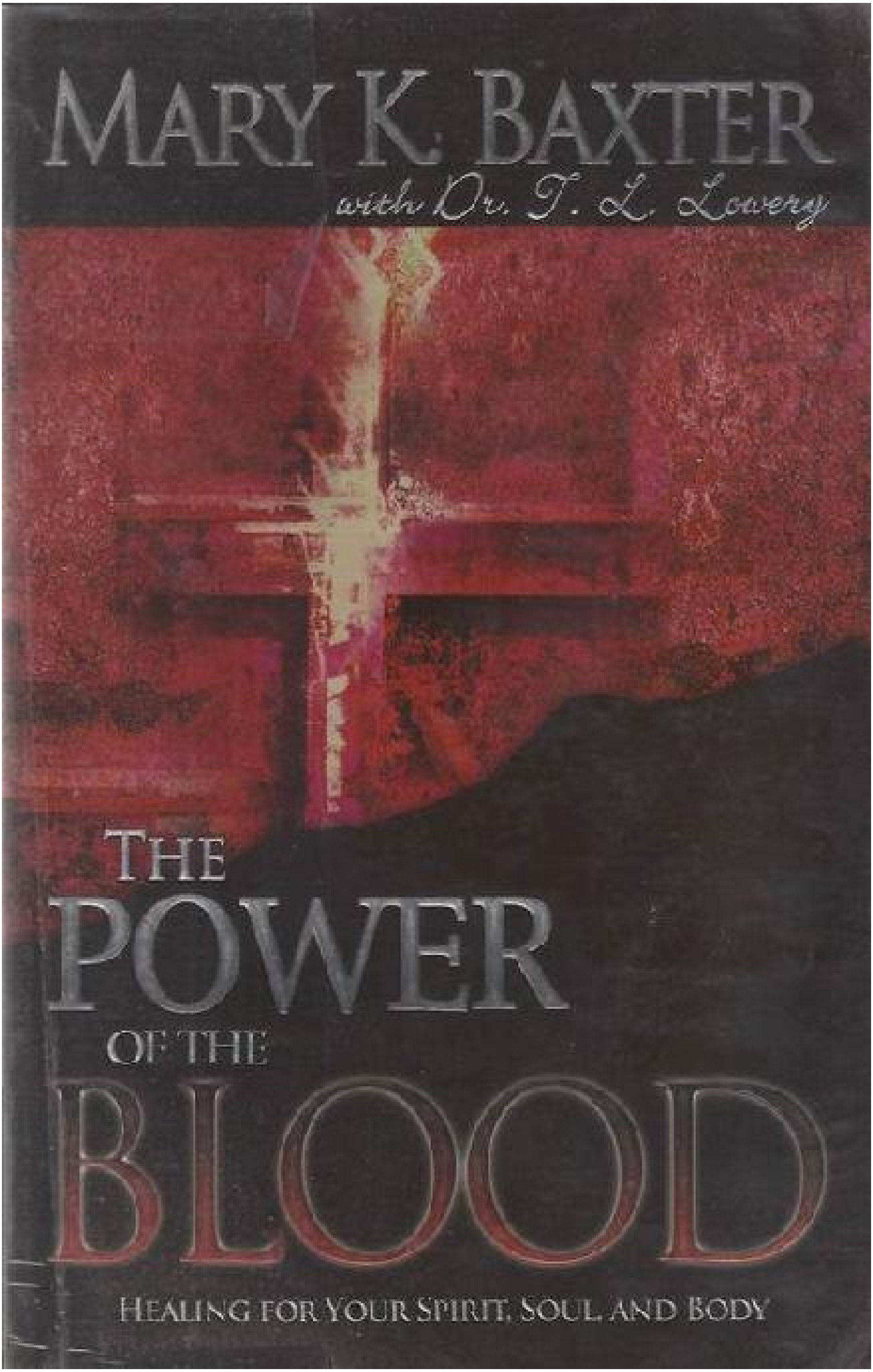
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MARY K. BAXTER
with Dr. T. L. Lowery
THE POWER OF THE BLOOD
HEALING FOR YOUR SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

The Power of the Blood of Jesus

Whatever your situation, you can have new intimacy with your heavenly Father and receive miraculous answers to your prayers—through the power of the blood.

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- Walking in divine health and wholeness
- Living in peace and divine protection
- Receiving help when tempted
- Sharing the gospel with others
- Bringing loved ones to God

In an exploration of the Scripture, Mary K. Baxter leads the reader to a deeper understanding of the purpose and infinite provision of the shed blood of Christ.

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MARY K. BAXTER

met dr. T.L. Lowery



DIE KRAG VAN DIE BLOED

GENESING VIR JOU GEES, SIEL EN LIGGAAM

Die Krag van die Bloed van Jesus

Wat jou situasie ook al mag wees, jy kan tot 'n nuwe intimiteit met jou hemelse Vader kom en op 'n wonderlike wyse antwoorde op jou gebede ontvang - en dit alles deur die krag van die bloed.

Mary K. Baxter vertel hier op aangrypende wyse vir die leser meer oor die krag van Jesus se bloed. Ervaar self resultate wat jou lewe sal verander.

- Oorwin die krag van sonde in jou lewe
- Leef in heelheid en ervaar goddelike gesondheid
- Leef in vrede en ervaar goddelike beskerming
- Ontvang halp in tye van versoeking
- Deel die evangelie met ander
- Lei geliefdes na God

Mary K. Baxter delf diep in die Skrif en lei die leser tot 'n beter begrip van waarvoor Jesus alles voorsiening gemaak het toe Hy sy kosbare bloed vir ons aan die kruis gestort het.

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THE POWER OF THE BLOOD

HEALING FOR YOUR SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

MARY K. BAXTER
with Dr. T. L. Lowery

WHITAKER HOUSE

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DIE

KRAG

VAN DIE

BLOED

GENESING VIR Jou GEES, SlEL EN LIGGAAM

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Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to the precious

Lamb of God

whose blood was shed to redeem fallen man. Without the blood, we would be lost for eternity.

Hierdie boek word met liefde opgedra aan die

kosbare

Lam van God

wie se bloed gestort is om die gevalle mens te red.

Sonder die bloed sou ons tot in ewigheid

verlore gewees het.

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Preface by Dr. T. L. Lowery

In Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* Mary Knowles is quoted as saying that Johnson "gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears the heart out of it."

This line describes what Mary K. Baxter and I have attempted in our writing. In four previous books, *A Divine Revelation of Hell, A Divine Revelation of Heaven, A Divine Revelation of the Spirit Realm,* and *A Divine Revelation of Angels,* we have desired to "tear the heart out" of our subjects by getting at their essence.

Mary K. Baxter is a choice servant of God, and she is especially gifted and blessed of Him in the realm of special revelations and visions.

She ministers as she writes—under a heavy anointing and with a boldness to proclaim the truth. From her eyewitness tour through heaven and hell to special insight into the doctrine of angels, her writing is spellbinding. You always want to read the next page. As her pastor for several years, I have watched Mary grow deeper in the Lord and in her knowledge of His Word. Her use of the Word in her books gives a richness and delight to the reading of them.

Hundreds of thousands of people in many countries have read and been blessed by Mary K. Baxter's works. She is a popular speaker and writer. She enjoys wide acceptance and amazingly positive feedback from her readers.

I am keenly interested in the topic of the blood of Jesus Christ, and I have collaborated with Mary in the writing of this book. We have diligently studied the Word of God, and we present this material with the full assurance that its teachings are backed up by the Bible.

My prayer for this book is that it will be even more widely read and accepted than her other works. May its anointed words speak to the heart of every reader who opens these pages.

My prayer for you is that God will bless you and keep you. May He cause His face to shine on you, and may He bless you in everything you do. May God give you a fresh apostolic anointing and renewed vision as you read these pages. May you be abundantly fruitful in

building His kingdom and in reaping the end-time harvest.

Voorwoord

DEUR DR TL LOWERY

In Boswell se *Life of Johnson* haal hy Mary Knowles aan waar sy sê dat Johnson onmiddellik by die kern van 'n boek uitkom - hy haal die hart van die boek uit.

Dit beskryf presies wat Mary K Baxter en ek met hierdie boek probeer doen het. In vier voorafgaande boeke, *Openbaring van die Ewigheid - Die Hel*; *Openbaring van die Ewigheid - Die Hemel*; *Openbaring van die Geesteswêreld* en *Openbaring van Engele,* het ons waarlik gepoog om die hart van die onderwerp uit te haal deur dadelik by die kern uit te kom.

Mary K Baxter is 'n toegewyde kind van God en sy is besonder begenadig en geseën deur Hom in die realm van spesiale openbarings en visioene. Sy bedien en sy skryf onder 'n besondere salwing en met 'n vrymoedigheid om die waarheid te openbaar. Van haar ooggetuie-reise deur die hemel en die hel tot by haar spesiale insig in die leer van engele, boei haar werk. Jy wil altyd die volgende bladsy lees. As haar leraar vir baie jare, het ek gesien hoe Mary in die Here en in die kennis van sy Woord groei. Haar gebruik van die Woord in haar boeke maak dit ryker en verskaf vreugde aan elkeen wat dit lees.

Honderde-duisende mense in baie lande het al Mary K Baxter se boeke gelees en is deur dit geseën. Sy is 'n gewilde spreker en skrywer. Sy word wyd aanvaar en daar is geweldige positiewe terugvoering op haar boeke.

Ek stel baie belang as dit by die bloed van Jesus Christus kom en ek het saam met Mary aan die skryf van hierdie boek gewerk. Ons het die Woord van God getrou bestudeer en ons bied hierdie materiaal aan met die volle versekering dat dít wat ons hier sê, deur die Bybel ondersteun word.

My gebed vir hierdie boek is dat dit selfs nog wyer gelees en aanvaar sal word as haar ander werke. Mag die gesalfde woorde van hierdie boek met die hart van elke leser wat hierdie bladsye oopslaan, praat.

My gebed vir jou is dat God jou sal seën en bewaar. Mag Hy sy gesig oor jou laat skyn en mag Hy jou in alles wat jy doen, seën. Mag God jou 'n vars apostoliese salwing en 'n nuwe visie gee terwyl jy hierdie bladsye lees. Mag jy oorweldigend vrugbaar wees in die opbou van sy koninkryk en in die inbring van die eindtyd-oes.

Preface and acknowledgments by **Mary K. Baxter**

Why is the blood of Christ important to Christianity? It has been said that "the Bible is a book of blood." It not only gives a faithful account of man's sins and heinous crimes, but also shows God bringing redemption to mankind through the shedding of the blood of His Son.

This book is an overview of what the Bible says about our atonement and deliverance through the blood of Christ, as well as an account of the revelation that God has given me concerning the blood.

The Lord impressed on me the importance of His people knowing *why* we believe in the blood and why it is so crucial to our faith. I have felt the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the writing of these words, and I believe He wants His message to go out. Ultimately, the message of the blood reveals how deeply God loves us and the powerful provision that He has made for us.

I wish to acknowledge a few of the many people who have helped to make this project possible. My pastor, mentor, and spiritual advisor, Dr. T. L. Lowery, has cowritten this book with me. Additionally, he has provided invaluable assistance in the entire project. Without him and his advice, prayer, and help, this book would not have gone forward. I also honor his beautiful wife, Mildred, for her support, encouragement, and valuable assistance in this ministry.

I want to sincerely thank my church, the National Church of God in Washington, D.C., and my pastor, the Reverend Stephen Lowery, for their support and encouragement.

I gratefully recognize and credit those at Whitaker House in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, who have been so instrumental in making these messages from God available to the public.

Most of all, I give grateful tribute and praise to God, who has called me and anointed me to share these messages. I praise, honor, and give glory to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Voorwoord en Erkenning

DEUR MARY K BAXTER

Waarom is die bloed van Christus vir die Christendom belangrik? Daar is al gesê dat die Bybel "'n boek van bloed" is. Dit lewer nie net getrou verslag van die mens se sondes en verskriklike oortredings nie, maar wys ook hoe God aan die mensdom verlossing bring deur die storting van sy Seun se bloed.

Hierdie boek is 'n oorsig van wat die Bybel sê oor ons boetedoening en verlossing deur die bloed van Christus, asook 'n verslag van die openbaring wat God vir my oor die bloed gegee het.

Die Here het my laat verstaan hoe belangrik dit is dat sy mense moet weet *waarom* ons in die bloed glo en waarom dit so krities is vir ons geloof. Ek het die salwing van die Heilige Gees gevoel terwyl ek hierdie woorde geskryf het en ek glo dat Hy wil hê dat die woorde moet uitgaan. In die finale instansie openbaar die boodskap van die bloed hoe diep God se liefde vir ons is en watter wonderlike voorsiening Hy vir ons gemaak het.

Ek wil graag erkenning gee aan 'n paar van die baie mense wat gehelp het om hierdie projek moontlik te maak. My leraar, mentor en geestelike raadgewer, dr TL Lowery, het hierdie boek saam met my geskryf. Sy hulp deur hierdie hele projek was ook vir my van onskatbare waarde. Sonder hom en sy raad, gebed en hulp sou hierdie boek nooit gevorder het nie. Ek sê ook dankie aan sy pragtige vrou, Mildred, vir haar ondersteuning, aanmoediging en waarde- volle hulp in hierdie bediening.

Ek wil ook my kerk, my National Church of God in Washington, D.C., en my leraar, eerwaarde Stephen Lowery, vir hulle ondersteuning en aanmoediging bedank.

Ek gee met dank erkenning en krediet aan diegene by Whitaker House in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, wat daartoe bygedra het om hierdie boodskappe van God aan die publiek bekend te maak.

Maar in die eerste plek gee ek dankbaar lof en erkenning aan God, wat my geroep en gesalf het om hierdie boodskappe te deel. Ek loof, eer en verheerlik God die Vader, God die Seun en God die Heilige Gees.

Chapter 1: The MEANING OF the Blood

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

—Romans 5:10

The film *The Passion of the Christ* has received much attention around the world. It has caused hundreds of thousands of people to consider how much Jesus Christ suffered when He bled and died on the cross. Yet many do not fully understand the significance of the blood that He shed. They have a general understanding that Jesus died on their behalf, but they don't realize the full implications of this precious gift.

Understanding the death of Jesus Christ and the blood that He shed is not for curiosity's sake or historical knowledge alone. The results of Jesus' death and resurrection reach across the centuries and are available to us today. Many of us have not recognized how Jesus' blood is meant to be applied to all aspects of our lives—how it can bring healing, protection, and deliverance for ourselves and those whom we love. His blood makes available to us greater freedom, power, and deliverance than we can imagine. When we apply the truth of the blood to our lives, we can live in the fullness and power that Jesus provides for us.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE BLOOD

One night, as I was speaking at a church in Phoenix, I began to see a vision of the great power of God. The Lord opened my spiritual eyes, and the manifestations of His power seemed to be rolling in on the horizon in a way I had never seen before. I could "see" through the rooftop of the church, and the whole sky was filled with a bloodred mist.

The atmosphere in that church was charged with an energy that I have witnessed only a few times before or since. I saw an angel prompting various people in the congregation and sweeping the carpets in the church, preparing the way for the receiving of the Word of God. I asked the Lord what these things meant—the red mist in the sky and the angel preparing the way. He told me that they were symbolic of the cleansing and sanctifying blood of the Lamb of God.

The Lord also showed me what looked like a big mirror, which suddenly appeared on the wall. It resembled a huge movie screen, and breathtaking scenes began to appear on it. Through it, God began to show me three dimensions of the blood of His Son, the precious Lamb of God, and the sacrifice He made for us at Calvary.

The Historical Dimension

The first dimension of the blood of the Lamb is a historical one. This dimension refers to the period of time some 2,000 years ago during which Jesus lived on earth and suffered indignities, wounds, and bloodshed. That relatively short space of time is the most significant period ever to have occurred in the history of the world. When Jesus took humanity's sins upon Himself at Calvary—once and for all—mankind was given the ability to be reconciled with its Creator. We were given the gift of being able to draw close to Him in a relationship of love, as He always intended.

The Eternal Dimension

Second, the sufferings of Jesus also somehow exist in a timeless dimension. The Bible says that *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8). God's Word also describes Jesus Christ as *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Revelation 13:8). God preordained Jesus' sufferings in eternity, and they are also

considered complete in all of eternity. Jesus' blood is sufficient, and God's mercy is extended to humanity in all of time and space.

The Continuing Dimension

Third, there is a continuing dimension of the blood of Christ. The shed blood of Jesus is an ongoing provision for those who have trusted in Him; it still can—and should—be applied in the lives of believers throughout the world.

This provision must remain real to us. One of the things that God said to me in the many revelations He gave me was, "Remember the blood!" We must remember the reason for the shedding of His blood. We are God's redeemed people, and we need to proclaim the One perfect sacrifice of Jesus and His blood, which was shed to cleanse humanity of ignorance and sin.

The ongoing commemoration of Christ's death and shed blood was given to us by Jesus Himself at the last Passover He shared with His disciples. It is a practice that we should neither ignore nor take for granted. The blood of Christ is not to be treated as something ordinary or common. It is precious to God and to us. Without the blood, none of us could have a relationship with our heavenly Father or live in victory over temptation, sin, and the enemy. Through Jesus' blood, we are united with our heavenly Father and given the power to overcome these things.

The continuing dimension of the blood, and what it means for our lives, is the central focus of this book.

THE PROVISION OF THE BLOOD

The blood of Jesus Christ is a crimson fountain that not only flows across centuries and spans the generations, but also supersedes cultures and customs. It breaks down walls that divide people. It can melt the most callous, murderous, vengeful, and spiteful heart known to mankind. It touches broken and despised hearts. It brings hope, cleansing, healing, and deliverance.

By the blood of Jesus, we have these and other wonderful provisions, which we will see throughout this book:

- We receive the remission (forgiveness) of our sins (Matthew 26:28).
- We are completely washed of our sins (Revelation 1:5).
- We are redeemed (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
- We are justified—regarded as innocent—before God (Romans 5:9).
- We are brought near to God (Ephesians 2:13).
- We have peace with God (Colossians 1:20).
- We are cleansed in our consciences (Hebrews 9:14).
- We are made holy and set apart for God (Hebrews 13:12).
- We can have new boldness to approach God and ask for His help (Hebrews 10:19).
- We can have ongoing cleansing from sin (1 John 1:7).
- We can overcome the enemy (Revelation 12:11).

A VISION OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Once, when I was diligently praying, I had a vision of the day that Christ was crucified. It broke my heart. I saw the Roman soldiers nailing His hands to the cross using huge nails. I saw His blood dripping and running down. I remember seeing the blood coming not only from His hands, but also from all over His body. He had been beaten so badly that I wanted to comfort Him and do something to help Him.

The men who were doing this terrible deed were cursing and blaspheming Him. Then, the Lord's eyes looked straight at the men, and they fell backward. After a little while, however, they continued to prepare Him for crucifixion. I saw them lift up the Lord on the cross. It was so horrible and sad! I was weeping as I saw this mighty vision.

Then I saw what looked like thousands of angels. They seemed to be invisible to those who were at the crucifixion, but I could see them clearly. The angels placed every drop of blood that Jesus shed in vessels they held in their hands, and then they carried the blood of Jesus to heaven.

The angels were crying as they carried the drops of blood. The precious treasure they carried represented a tremendous sacrifice for Jesus. As I watched in awe, I began to cry so hard that I could not see the vision anymore. I was overwhelmed by the awesome price that He paid for you and me.

God began to speak to me about writing a book on the blood of the Lamb. He showed me things in the Spirit that demonstrated what the Word says about the power of the blood. He began to show me what it means to be cleansed, kept, and set free by this precious blood that Jesus shed on Calvary.

My soul burned within me as the Lord led me to write and talk to others about the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Through various visions and revelations, I began to see, more and more, the absolute *necessity* for the shedding of the blood of Christ. One of the chief reasons for this necessity is that our lives had to be ransomed, and *"the life...is in the blood"* (Leviticus 17:11). We will look at the nature of this lifeblood in the next chapter.

Hoofstuk 1: Die betekenis van die bloed

"'Want as ons, terwyl ons nog vyande was, met God versoen is deur die dood van sy Seun, veel meer sal ons deur sy lewe gered word nou dat ons versoen is."
- Romeine 5:10

Die rolprent *The Passion of the Christ* het dwarsoor die wêreld opslae gemaak. Dit het honderde- duisende mense laat besef hoe Jesus Christus gely het toe Hy aan die kruis gebloei en gesterf het. Tog is daar baie wat nie ten volle verstaan wat die betekenis is van die bloed wat Jesus gestort het nie. Hulle verstaan so vaagweg dat Hy ter wille van hulle gesterf het, maar hulle verstaan nie die volle implikasies van dié kosbare geskenk nie.

Om die dood van Jesus Christus te verstaan, is nie iets wat 'n mens op 'n historiese vlak of uit nuuskierigheid alleen moet weet nie. Die resultate van Jesus se dood en opstanding strek oor eeue en is vandag nog vir ons beskik- baar. Baie van ons besef nie dat Jesus se bloed veronderstel is om op alle aspekte van ons lewens toegepas te word en dat dit genesing, beskerming en verlossing kan bring nie - nie net vir onsself nie, maar ook vir dié wat ons liefhet. Sy bloed stel groter vryheid, krag en verlossing vry as wat ons ons ooit kan voorstel. As ons die waarheid van die bloed op ons lewens toepas, kan ons in die volheid en krag leef wat Jesus vir ons voorsien.

DRIE DIMENSIES VAN DIE BLOED

Terwyl ek een aand in 'n kerk in Phoenix opgetree het, het ek begin om 'n visioen van die geweldige krag van God te sien. Die Here het my geestelike oë oopgemaak en die manifesterings van sy krag het voor my oë oor die horison aangerol gekom op 'n manier wat ek nog nooit vantevore gesien het nie. Ek kon deur die dak van die kerk sien en die lug was in 'n bloedrooi mis gehul.

Die atmosfeer in daardie kerk was gelaai met 'n krag wat ek nog net 'n paar keer tevore óf daarna beleef het. Ek het gesien hoe 'n engel 'n hele paar mense in die gemeente bemoedig en die mat in die kerk vee en só die weg vir die ontvangs van die Woord van God voorberei. Ek het die Here gevra wat al die dinge beteken - die rooi mis in die lug en die engel wat die weg voorberei. Hy het vir my gesê dat dit simbolies was van die reinigende en heiligmakende bloed van die Lam van God.

Die Here het ook vir my iets gewys wat soos 'n groot spieël gelyk het - dit het skielik teen die muur verskyn. Dit het byna soos 'n rolprentdoek gelyk en asembenemende tonele het daarin begin afspeel. Daardeur het die Here vir my drie dimensies van die bloed

van sy Seun, die kosbare Lam van God en die offer wat Hy op Golgota vir ons gebring het, gewys.

DIE HISTORIESE DIMENSIE

Die eerste dimensie van die bloed van die Lam is 'n historiese een. Hierdie dimensie verwys na die periode sowat 2 000 jaar gelede toe Jesus op die aarde geleef het en onreg en wonde moes verduur en sy bloed vir ons gestort het. Daardie relatief kort tydperk is die mees betekenisvolle periode wat hom ooit in die geskiedenis van die wêreld afgespeel het. Toe Jesus die sonde van die mensdom by Golgota eens en vir altyd op Hom geneem het, het Hy dit vir die mens moontlik gemaak om met sy Skepper versoen te raak.
Ons het die gawe ontvang om in 'n verhouding van liefde tot Hom te nader, soos wat Hy dit van altyd af bedoel het.

DIE EWIGE DIMENSIE

In die tweede plek bestaan Jesus se lyding ook op die een of ander manier in 'n tydlose dimensie. Die Bybel sê: *"Jesus Christus is gister en vandag dieselfde en tot in ewigheid"* (Hebreërs 13:8). God se Woord beskryf Jesus Christus ook as *"van die grondlegging van die wêreld af... die Lam wat geslag is"* (Openbaring 13:8). God het Jesus se lyding in die ewigheid reeds bepaal en sy lyding is ook voldoende en vol- maak tot in ewigheid. Jesus se bloed is voldoende en God se genade word in alle ewigheid aan die mensdom gerig.

DIE AANEENLOPENDE DIMENSIE

In die derde plek het Christus se bloed 'n aaneenlopende dimensie. Die feit dat Hy sy bloed gestort het, maak aan- eenlopend voorsiening vir almal wat in Hom glo; dit kan steeds - en behoort - aangewend te word in die lewens van gelowiges dwarsoor die wêreld.

Hierdie voorsiening moet vir ons 'n realiteit bly. Een van die dinge wat God vir my gesê het in die baie openbarings wat Hy vir my gegee het, is: "Onthou die bloed!" Ons moet onthou waarom Hy sy bloed gestort het. Ons is God se verloste mense en ons moet die enkele volmaakte offer van Jesus en sy bloed vir onsself toe-eien - die offer wat Hy gebring het om die mensdom van onkunde en sonde te red.

Jesus self het het met die laaste Paasfees wat Hy saam met sy dissipels gevier het, vir ons gesê om sy dood en sy gestorte bloed te herdenk - en dit deurlopend te doen. Dit is iets wat ons nie durf ignoreer of as vanselfsprekend aan- vaar nie. Die bloed van Christus is nie iets wat 'n mens as gewoon of algemeen mag beskou nie. Dit is vir God en vir ons kosbaar. Daarsonder sou nie een van ons 'n verhouding met ons hemelse Vader gehad het, of in oorwinning oor versoeking, die sonde en die vyand kon leef nie. Deur Jesus se bloed is ons met ons hemelse Vader verenig en het ons die krag ontvang om daardie

dinge die hoof te bied.

Die aaneenlopende dimensie van die bloed en wat dit vir ons lewens beteken, is die fokuspunt van hierdie boek.

DIE VOORSIENING VAN DIE BLOED

Die bloed van Jesus Christus is 'n bloedrooi fontein wat nie slegs oor eeue heen vloei en geslagte oorspan nie, maar ook kulture en gebruike vervang. Dit breek die mure wat mense skei, af. Dit kan die hardste, wraaksugtigste en mees moordende hart wat aan die mens bekend is, sag maak. Dit raak gebroke en verworpe harte aan. Dit bring hoop, reiniging, genesing en verlossing.

Danksy die bloed van Jesus het ons hierdie en ander fasette van voorsiening wat ons in dié boek gaan sien:-

- Ons ontvang vergifnis van ons sonde (Matthéus 26:28).
- Ons sondes word heeltemal weggewas (Openbaring 1:5).
- Ons word verlos (Efésiërs 1:7; Kolossense 1:14).
- Ons word regverdig gemaak - voor God gereken as onskuldig (Romeine 5:9).
- Ons word naby aan God gebring (Efésiërs 2:13).
- Ons het vrede met God (Kolossense 1:20).
- Ons gewetes word gereinig (Hebreërs 9:14).
- Ons word geheilig en eenkant gesit vir God (Hebreërs 13:12).
- Ons kan met 'n nuwe vrymoedigheid na God toe gaan en Hom om hulp vra (Hebreërs 10:19).
- Ons kan aaneenlopende reiniging van sonde hê (1 Johannes 1:7).
- Ons kan die vyand verslaan (Openbaring 12:11).

'n VISIOEN VAN DIE KRUISIGING

Terwyl ek op 'n keer besig was om met oorgawe te bid, het ek 'n visioen gehad van die dag toe Jesus gekruisig is. Dit het my hart gebreek. Ek het gesien hoe die Romeinse soldate Sy hande met groot spykers aan die kruis vasspyker. Ek het Sy bloed sien drup en vloei. Ek onthou dat ek gesien het hoe die bloed nie net uit Sy hande vloei nie, maar uit Sy hele liggaam uit. Hy was só verskriklik geslaan, dat ek Hom graag wou troos en iets wou doen om Hom te help.

Die mans wat besig was om die verskriklike dinge aan Hom te doen, het Hom deurentyd gevloek en geskel en belaster. Toe kyk die Here reguit na hulle - en hulle het agter- oor geslaan. Na 'n rukkie het hulle egter weer voortgegaan om Hom vir die kruisiging voor te berei. Ek het gesien hoe hulle die Here teen die kruis oplig. Dit was verskriklik. Ek het gehuil terwyl ek dié magtige openbaring gesien het.

Toe sien ek iets wat soos duisende engele lyk. Hulle was onsigbaar vir die mense by die kruisiging, maar ek kon hulle duidelik sien. Die engele het elke druppel bloed wat Jesus gestort het in kelke wat hulle

in hulle hande vasgehou het, opgetel en daarna het hulle die bloed van Jesus na die hemel toe geneem.

Die engele het gehuil terwyl hulle die druppels bloed weggeneem het. Die kosbare skat wat hulle gedra het, het Jesus se geweldige opoffering verteenwoordig. Ek het met ontsag toegekyk en so hard begin huil dat ek nie meer die visioen kon sien nie. Ek was oorweldig deur die verskriklike prys wat Hy vir jou en my betaal het.

Toe het God met my daaroor begin praat dat ek 'n boek oor die bloed van die Lam moes skryf. Hy het vir my dinge in die Gees gewys wat vir my demonstreer het wat die Woord oor die krag van die bloed sê. Hy het ook begin om vir my te wys wat dit beteken om gereinig, in stand gehou en bevry te word deur die kosbare bloed wat Jesus op Golgota gestort het.

My siel het in my binneste gebrand toe die Here my gelei het om oor die kosbare bloed van die Lam van God te skryf en ook daaroor te praat. Ek het, deur verskeie visioene en openbarings, al hoe duideliker begin sien dat dit absoluut noodsaaklik was dat die bloed van Christus gestort moes word. Een van die hoofredes vir hierdie noodsaaklikheid is dat ons lewens teruggekoop moes word en *"die siel van die vlees is in die bloed"* (Levítikus 17:11). Ons gaan in die volgende hoofstuk na die aard van hierdie lewensbloed kyk.

Chapter 2: THE LIFE IS IN the Blood

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood."
—Leviticus 17:11

The blood that courses through our veins is a common denominator for all humanity. It is through blood that every human being has physical life. In 1628, physician and anatomist Dr. William Harvey published *On the Circulation of the Blood,* in which he proposed that life is in the blood. The discovery of how blood circulates was perhaps the most significant medical breakthrough of the seventeenth century. This knowledge was essential for understanding how the human body functions, as well as the healing of disease.

Yet the crucial fact that the life of the entire body is derived from its blood was already clearly stated in the Bible thousands of years earlier. God told the Old Testament patriarch Noah,

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh ***with its life, that is, its blood.*** *Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*

(Genesis 9:3-6, emphasis added)

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF BLOOD

The various compounds and chemicals that make up the physiology of blood operate in a way that is still not fully understood, even with our modern medical advances. Human blood and its functioning in the body is a subject so complex that an entire medical specialty—hematology—is dedicated to its study.

This mysterious fluid circulates around the entire body approximately every twenty- three seconds. It is constantly in motion, circulating in the heart, arteries, capillaries, and veins.

Life, that mysterious something which scientists [with their test tubes and modern instruments] have never yet been able to define or fathom, is said by God to be in the blood of the flesh, so that there can be no life without the blood.

...In the human body there are many different kinds of tissues. We define them as muscle, nerve, fat, gland, bone, connective tissues, etc. All these tissues have one thing in common: they are fixed cells, microscopically small and having a specific and limited function. Unlike these fixed tissues, the blood is fluid and mobile, That is, it is not limited to one part of the body but is free to move throughout the entire body and supply the fixed cells with nourishment and carry off the waste products.[1]

The average adult has ten pints of blood in his body. Normally, seven percent of the body's weight is blood.[2] Blood is produced in the bone marrow, and it recycles and cleanses itself hundreds of times a day. It circulates through the body, pumped by the heart and oxygenated by the lungs. It delivers nutrients and oxygen, as well as hormones and other substances, to the cells and takes away carbon dioxide and other waste products. Disease-fighting agents in the blood attack and destroy invading germs.

Blood, therefore, gives us strength. It makes growth possible. It is the protector of the body. It fights illness and disease. It is the body's frontline defense against germs, bacteria, and harmful microorganisms. It provides an organized resistance against anything that is harmful to the body. It plays a vital role in our immune system and in maintaining a relatively constant body temperature. It is a harbinger of health and wellbeing.

A donation of healthy blood is a tremendous blessing to the sick. Approximately thirty-two thousand pints of blood are used in the United States every day of the year.[3] The Red Cross says that an American needs a blood transfusion for medical treatment every two seconds.[4] Blood transfusions are needed for surgeries, the treatment of accident victims, and for people with circulatory problems. Good health is not possible with poor blood, and blood transfusions save literally thousands of lives each year.

Blood Is a “River of life”

Blood is a miracle fluid that only God could make. Though science still doesn’t fully understand how blood functions, it is clear that, without blood, life ends. For example, in general, when a muscle stops working, the rest of the body continues working; but if the blood fails, the entire body dies. Blood contains that indefinable ingredient that gives life to every cell in the body.

The Bible reveals the importance of this vital “river of life” that flows in our bodies. God has assigned to blood a certain sacredness that is mysteriously connected to life by His own decree:

This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood.

(Leviticus 3:17)

Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 12:23-25)

The Corruption of the blood of Mankind

Blood is precious and vital to life, but the blood we have today is not the same blood that God originally gave humanity. When mankind rebelled against God, its very nature became corrupt and its blood became tainted. H. A. Maxwell Whyte explained,

Adam's sin...brought sin and sickness into human blood. If Adam had not sinned, he would not have died. But by his sin, he introduced death into the human family. The human body, therefore, became subject to corruption and decay, and death ultimately comes to each one of us.[5]

M. R. DeHaan, author of *The Chemistry of the Blood,* agreed:

Since the Life is in the blood, according to the Scriptures, and the wages of sin is death, sin affected the blood of Adam and caused him to die. Because [all men are descended from Adam and] the blood of all men partakes of the sin of Adam, it can only be cleansed by the application of sinless blood, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.[6]

THE FIRST SHEDDING OF BLOOD

We often think that the initial shedding of blood in the Bible happened when Cain killed his brother, Abel. Yet there was an instance before that, and it reveals the necessity of blood sacrifice to atone for sin and bloodshed.

The first occurrence of the shedding of blood was in the garden of Eden when God sacrificed an animal or animals to provide a covering for humanity's shame. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God and tried to live without Him, the Bible says, *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings"* (Genesis 3:7). The fig leaves were apparently not a sufficient covering, for the Bible says, *"Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them"* (v. 21).

Where did these skins come from? Animals must have had to be killed so that their skins could become coverings for the nakedness of Adam and Eve. This shedding of blood was not only for the purpose of covering their physical nakedness, but it was also a covering for their spiritual nakedness. Fig leaves might have been enough to cover physical nakedness, but they would not suffice to atone for sin or enable a person to have a restored relationship with a holy God.

In Genesis 4:3-5, when Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel, brought their offerings to the Lord, we see that the sacrifice of animals to the Lord was acceptable to Him while the offering of crops was not. This was not because tending sheep was a more honorable vocation than tilling the ground. Both were legitimate occupations. For Cain and Abel to be acceptable before the Lord, however, their sins needed to be addressed, and their sins could be covered only through a blood sacrifice. The book of Hebrews says, *"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts"* (Hebrews 11:4). In unmistakable language, the Bible declares, *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission* [of sin]" (Hebrews 9:22).

From the time of the rebellion of Adam and Eve, therefore, sacrifices of animals had to be made to atone for the sins of mankind

so that they could have a relationship with their holy God. Innocent blood had to be sacrificed for the sins of humanity—in this case, the blood of animals. These sacrifices were not a permanent solution to sin, however. They were merely a forerunner of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ—a sinless Man—for the sins of the world.

The First Taking of human Life

The precious nature of blood continues to unfold to us as we further read the biblical account of the beginning of humanity. Because blood is sacred, it is a cause for judgment if it is spilled wantonly. Tragically, a disregard for human life was manifested shortly after the human race began. Cain was angry when his offering of crops was not accepted. Although God warned Cain that his anger could lead to sin, Cain ignored Him and killed his brother out of jealousy— the first murder committed on earth.

God asked Cain,

What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

(Genesis 4:10-11)

This incident emphasizes the value of the blood of human beings. The act of murder and the shedding of another person's blood is so terrible an act that when Abel's blood was spilled out on the earth, it "cried out" to God for justice.

The Lord told Moses when He gave him the law,

You shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. (Numbers 35:33)

Since life is in the blood, only blood can make amends for the taking of life. God told the Israelites,

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; ***for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.****. for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, "You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off."* (Leviticus 17:11, 14, emphasis added)

Sadly, from the time of Cain until today, human beings have continued to shed one another's blood, destroying those made in the very image of God and ignoring the pricelessness of life. The Old Testament prophet Micah described the desperate state of mankind in this way:

The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother

with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands; the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together.
The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.
(Micah 7:2-4)

Humanity is in a fallen state. While most of us are not murderers, every one of us demonstrates our fallen nature in that we have all missed the mark. We have all sinned, in one way or another. None of us has lived a perfect life. No matter how good-natured we are or how loving and giving we may be, we still have instances of selfishness, jealousy, or other vices. In addition, the fallen nature of this world is demonstrated by the fact that suffering, in some form, is the common lot of all people. Things are not right for us personally, and they are not right in the world.

Not only has human life become cheap in many people's eyes, but humanity's understanding of and reaction to blood itself has been distorted. Blood seems to have a strong effect on human beings: It either repulses a person or appeals to him. Many are squeamish at the sight of blood. Others are morbidly curious about it, fascinated with blood itself and with its symbols.

Many people have attempted to understand the unusual power of blood to intrigue. Hollywood and the media understand the drawing power of bloodshed and gore. People involved in the occult use blood in various rites and ceremonies as a central part of their false religions. These things appeal to man's base instincts. The fact is that our enemy, Satan, understands the sacredness of blood and causes people to misuse it for his perverse, evil purposes.

After the fall of humanity, the evil and violence on earth became so bad that, by the time of Noah, God destroyed all the people in the world with a flood—except for Noah and his family, who were righteous in God's eyes. The Bible says,

Then the Lord saw that ***the wickedness of man was great*** *in the earth, and that* ***every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*** *And*
the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

(Genesis 6:5-6, emphasis added)

Attacking the Image of God

Through God's instructions to Noah and his family after the flood, we come to understand even more about the nature of blood and why it is so precious. In Genesis 9:6, God explained to Noah and his family that every person's life and blood are priceless because we are made in His image: *"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."* Even the lives of fallen human beings are valued in the sight of God because we were created in His image and any violation of our lives must be accounted for.

ATONEMENT NEEDED

Do you think that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they knew that they would unleash a bloodbath on the earth? Undoubtedly not, but that is what happened when they disregarded Him and His ways. We have experienced thousands of years of bloodshed through wars, massacres, genocide, and murder that ultimately resulted from that first disobedience. It is not just physical bloodshed that is the problem; rebellion against God is the overall cause, and it must be atoned for. As Jesus told us,

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment." But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

(Matthew 5:21-22)

All sin, including murder, leads to spiritual death and can be atoned for only by blood sacrifice. The price is high, and it must be paid. Sin must be dealt with. Bloodshed must be paid for by blood. Many centuries ago, these truths were evident in the Old Testament prophecies and practices. The sacrificial system was God's way of illustrating for us what the death of Christ—the shedding of His blood—would accomplish for us in restoring us to God and giving us eternal life.

Hoofstuk 2: "Die siel van die vlees is in die bloed"

"...die siel van die vlees is in die bloed"

-Levítikus 17:11

Die bloed wat deur ons are vloei is iets wat alle mense op aarde deel. Dit is danksy bloed dat alle mense lewe. In 1628 het die geneesheer en anatoom, dr William Harvey, die boek *On the Circulation of the Blood* publiseer, waarin hy die mening uitgespreek het dat die lewe in die bloed gesetel is. Die ontdekking van hoe bloed sirkuleer was waarskynlik die mees betekenisvolle mediese deurbraak van die sewentiende eeu. Hierdie kennis was noodsaaklik om te kan verstaan hoe die liggaam funksioneer, asook vir die genesing van siektes.

Maar die kritiese waarheid dat die lewe van die hele liggaam in die bloed gesetel is, is reeds eeue gelede in die Bybel gestel. God het

reeds vir die Ou-Testamentiese aartsvader Noag gesê:
"Alles wat beweeg en lewe, sal julle voedsel wees. Net soos die groen plante, gee Ek dit alles aan julle. Net die vleis ***met sy siel, met sy bloed,*** *mag julle nie eet nie. Maar wat julle eie bloed betref. Dit sal Ek eis: van al die diere sal Ek dit eis. Ook van die mens, van die een teenoor die ander, sal Ek die siel van die mens eis. Ely wat die bloed van 'n mens vergiet, sy bloed sal deur die mens vergiet word; want God het die mens na sy beeld gemaak"* (Génesis 9:3-6, klem bygevoeg).

DIE NATUUR EN DIE FUNKSIE VAN BLOED

Ondanks ons moderne geneeskundige wondertegnologie, verstaan ons nou nog nie ten volle presies hoe bloed saamgestel is en wat die presiese werking daarvan is nie. Menslike bloed en die wyse waarop dit in die liggaam fungeer is so 'n komplekse onderwerp dat 'n hele mediese spesialisveld - die hematologie - aan die bestudering daarvan gewy word.

Hierdie misterieuse vloeistof vloei sowat elke 23 sekondes deur die hele liggaam. Dit is voortdurend in beweging en sirkuleer in die hart, slagare, kleiner are en bloedvate.

Die lewe, daardie misterieuse iets wat wetenskaplikes (met hulle proefbuise en moderne instrumente) nog nooit in staat was om te definieer of te deurgrond nie, is iets wat God sê wat in die bloed van die liggaam gesetel is, wat beteken dat daar geen lewe sonder bloed kan wees nie.

"...Daar is baie verskillende soorte weefsel in die liggaam. Ons definieer hulle as spiere, senuwees, vet, kliere, been, bindweefsel en so meer. Al hierdie weefsel het een ding in gemeen: hulle bestaan uit vaste selle, mikroskopies klein en het 'n spesifieke en beperkte funksie. Anders as daardie vaste weefsel, is bloed vloeibaar en beweeglik, wat beteken dat dit nie beperk is tot een deel van die liggaam nie, maar dat dit vry is om dwarsdeur die hele liggaam te beweeg en die vaste selle van voeding te voorsien en terselfdertyd ook die afvalstowwe weg te voer" (MR de Haan, uit *The Chemistry of the Blood)*.

Die gemiddelde volwassene het tien pinte bloed in sy liggaam. Normaalweg bestaan sewe persent van die liggaam se massa uit bloed (http://wwwbloodcenters.org- /aboutblood/bloodfacts.htm). Bloed word in die beenmurg vervaardig en word honderde kere op 'n dag hersirkuleer en gereinig. Dit word deur die hart gepomp, sirkuleer dan deur die liggaam en ontvang suurstof van die longe af. Dit voorsien voedingstowwe en suurstof, asook hormone en ander stowwe aan die selle en neem koolstofdioksied en ander afvalstowwe weg. Bloed bevat ook sekere selle wat siektekieme beveg.

Ons bloed gee ons dus krag. Dit maak groei moontlik. Dit beskerm die liggaam. Dit beveg siektes. Dit is die liggaam se beskerming teen

kieme, bakterieë en skadelike mikro-organismes. Dit beveg enigiets wat skadelik is vir die liggaam. Dit speel 'n kernrol in ons immuunsisteem en in die handhawing van 'n relatief konstante liggaamstemperatuur. Dit beteken vir die liggaam gesondheid.

Enige skenking van gesonde bloed beteken baie vir diegene wat siek is. Bloedoortappings word benodig vir chirurgie, die behandeling van ongelukslagoffers, asook vir mense met bloedsirkulasieprobleme. Dit is gewoon nie moontlik om blakend gesond te wees as 'n mens se bloed nie ook gesond is nie en bloedoortappings red jaarliks derduisende lewens.

BLOED IS 'n "RIVIER VAN LEWE"

Bloed is 'n wondervloeistof wat slegs God kon skep. Hoewel die wetenskap nog steeds nie die werking van bloed heeltemal verstaan nie, is dit duidelik dat daar geen lewe sonder bloed kan wees nie. As 'n spier byvoorbeeld ophou werk, kan die res van die liggaam nog steeds regkom - maar as die bloed ingee, sterf die hele liggaam. Bloed bly dus daardie ondefinieerbare bestanddeel wat lewe gee aan elke sel in die liggaam.

Die Bybel openbaar die belangrikheid van hierdie "rivier van lewe" wat deur dië liggaam vloei. God het 'n sekere heiligheid aan die bloed toegeken en dit hou volgens sy Woord verband met die lewe self:

“'n Ewige insetting is dit vir julle geslagte in al julle woonplekke: géén vet en géén bloed mag julle eet nie" (Levítikus 3:17).

“Bly daar net vas by dat jy die bloed nie eet nie, want die bloed is die siel, en jy mag die siel nie saam met die vleis eet nie. Jy mag dit nie eet nie; op die grond moet jy dit uitgooi soos water. Jy mag dit nie eet nie, dat dit met jou en jou kinders ná jou goed kan gaan as jy doen wat reg is in die oë van die Here" (Deuteronómium 12:23-25).

DIE BESOEDELING VAN DIE MENS SE BLOED

Bloed is kosbaar en noodsaaklik om te kan lewe, maar die bloed wat ons vandag het, is nie dieselfde bloed wat God aanvanklik vir die mens gegee het nie. Toe die mens teen God in opstand gekom het, het sy natuur vol sonde en sy bloed besoedel geraak. HA Maxwell Whyte stel dit só in *The Power of the Blood:*

"Adam se sonde ... het sonde en siekte in die mens se bloed ingebring. As Adam nie gesondig het nie, sou hy nie gesterf het nie. Maar deur sy sonde het hy die dood oor die menslike geslag gebring. Só het die menslike liggaam onderworpe geraak aan verwording en verval, sodat die dood uiteindelik oor elkeen van ons se pad kom."

MR de Haan, skrywer van *The Chemistry of the Blood,* stem daarmee saam: "Aangesien die LEWE volgens die Skrif in die bloed gesetel is en die gevolg van die sonde die dood is, het die sonde Adam se bloed

aangetas en hom laat sterf. Aangesien alle mense van Adam afstam en die bloed van alle mense deel het aan die sonde van Adam, kan dit slegs gereinig word deur die toepassing van sondelose bloed, *want dit is die bloed wat boete doen vir die siel."*

DIE EERSTE KEER DAT BLOED GESTORT IS

Ons dink dikwels dat bloed die eerste keer gestort is toe Kain sy broer Abel doodgemaak het. Daar was egter 'n geleentheid nog vóór dit en dit openbaar hoe noodsaaklik dit is dat 'n bloedoffer gebring moet word om vir sonde te betaal.

Die eerste keer dat bloed gestort is, was in die Tuin van Eden toe die Here 'n dier of diere geoffer het nadat Adam en Eva gesondig het. Nadat hulle teen God in opstand gekom en probeer het om sonder Hom te leef, lees ons in die Bybel: *"Toe gaan altwee se oë oop, en hulle word gewaar dat hulle naak is; en hulle het vyeblare aanmekaargewerk en vir hulle skorte gemaak"* (Génesis 3:7). Die vyeblare was egter nie voldoende nie, want ons lees 'n entjie verder: *"En die Here God het vir die mens en sy vrou rokke van vel gemaak en hulle dit aangetrek"* (vers 21). Waar het hierdie diervelle vandaan gekom? Die Here moes diere doodgemaak het sodat Hy hulle velle kon gebruik om vir Adam en Eva klere te maak. Die stort van daardie diere se bloed het nie net ten doel gehad om hulle liggaamlike naaktheid te bedek nie, maar ook om hulle geestelike naaktheid te bedek. Die vyeblare was dalk genoeg om hulle liggaamlike naaktheid te bedek, maar dit kon beslis nie iets doen vir die sonde in hulle lewens of hulle verbrokkelde verhouding met 'n heilige God herstel nie.

In Génesis 4:3-5, waar Adam en Eva se seuns, Kain en Abel, hulle offers aan God bring, sien ons dat Abel se diere- offer aanvaar word, terwyl Kain se graanoffer verwerp word. Dit was nie omdat dit 'n meer eerbare werk was om skape op te pas as om die grond te bewerk nie. Maar Kain en Abel moes boete doen vir hulle sondes om voor God te kon staan en dit kon slegs deur die bring van 'n bloedoffer gedoen word. Ons lees in Hebreërs: *"Deur die geloof het Abel 'n beter offer aan God gebring as Kain, waardeur hy getuienis ontvang het dat hy regverdig was, omdat God oor sy gawes getuienis gegee het; en deur dieselfde geloofspreek hy nog nadat hy dood is"* (Hebreërs 11:4). Die Bybel sê ook ondubbelsinnig: *"...en son der bloedvergieting vind daar geen vergifnis plaas nie"* (Hebreërs 9:22).

Sedert die tyd van Adam en Eva se opstand teen God moes daar dus diere-offers gebring word om vir die sondes van mense boete te doen, sodat hulle verhouding met die heilige God herstel kon word. Onskuldige bloed moes vir die sondes van die mens geoffer word - in dié geval, die bloed van diere. Hierdie offers was egter nie 'n permanente oplossing nie. Hulle was bloot die heenwysing na die

finale offer wat gebring sou word deur Jesus Christus - 'n sondelose Mens - vir die sondes van die wêreld.

DIE EERSTE KEER DAT 'n LEWE GENEEM IS

Ons leer meer oor die aard van bloed soos wat die verhaal van die mensdom in die Bybel ontvou. Omdat bloed heilig is, vind daar oordeel plaas as dit in sonde vergiet word. Daar speel dan ook 'n tragiese toneel van bloedvergieting af kort ná die begin van die mens se lewe hier op aarde. Kain was kwaad omdat sy graanoffer nie deur God aanvaar is nie. Alhoewel die Here hom gewaarsku het dat sy woede tot sonde kon lei, het hy Hom geïgnoreer en sy broer uit jaloesie doodgemaak - dit was die heel eerste moord wat op aarde gepleeg is.

God het vir Kain gevra:

“Wat het jy gedoen? Die stem van die bloed van jou broer roep na My van die aarde af. Daarom sal jy vervloek wees, ver van die grond wat sy mond oopgemaak het om die bloed van jou broer uit jou hand te ontvang" (Génesis 4:10-11).

Hierdie verse beklemtoon hoe belangrik bloed is. Moord en bloedvergieting is só verskriklik dat toe Abel se bloed op die aarde geval het, dit na God geroep het om geregtigheid.

Toe die Here vir Moses die wet gegee het, het Hy vir hom gesê:

"En *julle mag die land nie ontheilig waar julle in is nie; want die bloed ontheilig die land, en vir die land word geen versoening gedoen vir die bloed wat daarin vergiet is nie, as net deur die bloed van hom wat dit vergiet het"* (Númeri 35:33).

Omdat die lewe in die bloed is, kan slegs die bloed vergoed as 'n lewe geneem is. God het vir die Israeliete gesê:

"Want die siel van die vlees is in die bloed, en ek het dit aan julle op die altaar gegee om vir julle siele versoening te doen; want die bloed bewerk versoening deur die siel... want wat die siel van alle vlees aangaan, sy bloed is met sy siel verbind. Daarom het Ek aan die kinders van Israel gesê: Julle mag die bloed van enige vlees nie eet nie, want die siel van alle vlees is sy bloed; elkeen wat dit eet, moet uitgeroei word" (Levítikus 17:11,14).

Ongelukkig het die mens van die tyd van Kain af tot vandag toe nog maar net aangehou om ander se bloed te vergiet en mense wat na die beeld van God geskape is dood te maak en daardeur die kosbaarheid van die lewe te ignoreer. Die Ou-Testamentiese profeet Miga het die desperate toestand van die mensdom só beskryf:

"Die vrome het verdwyn uit die land, en daar is geen opregte meer onder die mense nie; hulle loer almal op bloed; hulle jaag elkeen sy broer met die net. Na die kwaad gaan die hande uit, om dit dapper te doen. Die vors eis, en die regter vra betaling, en die groot man spreek die begeerte van sy siel uit, en hulle verdraai dit alles. Die beste van hulle is soos 'n doringstruik,

die mees opregte erger as 'n *doringheining. Die dag van jou wagte, jou besoeking kom; nou sal hulle verwarring daar wees"* (Miga 7:2-4).
Die mens verkeer in 'n gevalle toestand. Hoewel die meeste van ons nie moordenaars is nie, het ons almal al keer op keer gedemonstreer dat ons deel het aan die gevalle natuur van Adam. Ons het al almal op die een of ander manier gesondig. Nie een van ons leef 'n volmaakte lewe nie. Dit maak nie saak hóé goedgeaard ons is, of hóé liefdevol nie, ons het almal maar oomblikke van selfsug, jaloesie en ander tekortkominge. Daarbenewens word die gevalle natuur van die mens duidelik gedemonstreer deur die feit dat lyding in die een of ander vorm deel is van die lewens van alle mense. Dit gaan nie net altyd goed met ons persoonlik nie - en dit gaan nie goed in die wêreld nie.

Die menslike lewe het goedkoop geraak in die oë van baie en die mens se begrip van en reaksie op bloed het heeltemal verwronge geraak. Dit wil voorkom asof bloed steeds 'n hewige effek op mense het - hulle word óf daardeur af- gestoot, óf hulle word daardeur aangetrek. Baie mense voel aardig as hulle bloed sien, terwyl ander weer op 'n negatiewe manier nuuskierig daaroor is en heeltemal gefassineer word deur bloed en die verskillende simbole wat daarmee verband hou.

Baie mense het al probeer om die vreemde aantrekkings- krag van bloed te verstaan. Hollywood weet maar te goed hoe mense aangegryp word deur bloed en bloedvergieting. Mense wat betrokke is by die okkulte gebruik bloed in hulle rituele en seremonies. Sulke dinge hou 'n betowering in vir die laer instinkte van die mens. Dit is nou maar een- maal so dat ons vyand, die Satan, presies weet hoe heilig die bloed is en mense mislei om dit vir sy perverse, bose doeleindes te misbruik.

Na die sondeval van die mens, het die boosheid op aarde só erg geraak, dat die Here in die tyd van Noag al die mense op aarde deur 'n vloed doodgemaak het - almal behalwe Noag en sy familie, wat regverdig was in God se oë. Die Bybel sê vir ons:
"Toe die Here sien dat ***die boosheid van die mens op die aarde groot was*** *en* ***al die versinsels wat hy in sy hart bedink, altyd- deur net sleg*** *was, het dit die Here berou dat Hy die mens op die aarde gemaak het, en daar was smart in sy hart"* (Génesis 6:5-6, klem bygevoeg).

'n AANVAL OP DIE BEELD VAN GOD

Uit God se bevele aan Noag en sy familie ná die vloed, leer ons nog meer omtrent die aard van bloed en waarom dit so kosbaar is. In Génesis 9:6 verduidelik die Here vir Noag en sy familie dat elke mens se lewe en bloed kosbaar bo alles is, omdat ons na sy beeld geskape is: *"Hy wat die bloed van 'n mens vergiet, sy bloed sal deur die mens vergiet word; want God het die mens na sy beeld gemaak."* Selfs die lewe van die

gevalle mens is kosbaar voor God, want ons is na Sy beeld geskape en as so 'n lewe deur 'n ander beëindig word, word daar rekenskap van hom geëis.

'n PRYS MOET BETAAL WORD

Dink jy dat Adam en Eva, toe hulle ongehoorsaam aan God was, besef het dat hulle ongehoosaamheid so 'n bloedbad op die aarde tot gevolg sou hê? Natuurlik nie - maar dit is presies wat gebeur het toe hulle Hom en Sy weë geïgnoreer het. As gevolg van daardie eerste ongehoorsaamheid het ons duisende jare van bloedvergieting deur oorloë, massa- moorde, volksmoorde en individuele moorde beleef. En die probleem lê nie net by die bloedvergieting self nie - op- stand teen God is die oorsaak van alle ellende op aarde en 'n prys moet daarvoor betaal word. Boete moet gedoen word. Soos Jesus vir ons gesê het:
"Julle het gehoor dat aan die mense van die ou tyd gesê is: Jy mag nie doodslaan nie, maar elkeen wat doodslaan, moet verantwoording doen voor die gereg. Maar Ek sê vir julle dat elkeen wat vir sy broeder sonder rede kwaad is, verantwoording moet doen voor die gereg; en elkeen wat vir sy broeder sê: Raka! moet verantwoording doen voor die Groot Raad; en elkeen wat sê: Jou dwaas! moet verantwoording doen in die helse vuur" (Matthéus 5:21-22).
Alle sondes, ook moord, lei tot geestelike dood en daar kan slegs deur 'n bloedoffer vergifnis daarvoor bewerkstellig word. Die prys is hoog en dit moet betaal word. Die sonde kan nie maar net ïgnoreer word nie. Daar moet met bloed vir bloedvergieting betaal word. Baie eeue gelede het hier- die waarhede reeds duidelik in die Ou-Testamentiese profesieë en gebruike na vore gekom. Die offerstelsel was God se manier om vir ons te wys wat die dood van Christus - die stort van sy bloed - vir ons sou bewerkstellig - hoe dit ons verhouding met God sou herstel en aan ons die ewige lewe sou gee.

Chapter 3: The Blood in Old Testament Sacrifices

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”
—Hebrews 9:22

The necessity of the shedding of blood for reconciliation with God stands at the very center of the Christian message of redemption. From the first stories of Genesis to the last visions of Revelation, this theme recurs in diverse situations and in a multitude of ways.

Many Bibles have the words of Christ written in red ink. Yet it has been said that the entire Bible was written in red—blood red. This is because there is a “crimson thread” that extends all the way from the skins of the animals God killed to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve to the Rider of the white horse in the book of Revelation. The Bible calls the name of that Rider *“Faithful and True”* and says that *“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God”* (Revelation 19:11, 13).

Of the several hundred appearances of the word *blood* in the Old Testament, more than one hundred relate to the blood of sacrifices. These sacrifices were a type, or foreshadowing, of the supreme sacrifice of the sinless Christ and of the reconciliation with God provided through His shed blood. While the Old Testament sacrifices needed to be offered daily, yearly, and for specific situations, only His blood was able to atone for the sins of the whole world once and for all.

The sacrificial system practiced by the Jewish people from the time of the Exodus through the rest of the Old Testament is rich in symbolism. The Old Testament sacrifices that Israel offered up to God were defined and explained in exact detail through the commands the Lord gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Not only does the sacrificial system convey the strong message that sin must be paid for, but it also expresses the truth that, in the justice of God, only blood can pay the sin price. It prepares the way for us to understand the sacrifice of Christ.

Reinforcing the Personal Cost OF SIN

In the Levitical instructions for carrying out the rituals of sacrifice, blood was prominent. If the people followed God's instructions to the letter, they brought animals for sacrifice from their own flocks and herds rather than buying them from someone else. Only later, when temple worship had become corrupt and its practitioners were merely going through the motions, did the Jews purchase animals for sacrifice within the temple grounds. (See, for example, Mark 11:15.)

In the beginning, however, God's directions were that they were to bring only animals of the highest quality and value that already belonged to them. This requirement reinforced the message of the personal cost of sin.

Many people today, who see dead animals only in supermarkets, neatly packaged, think of the sacrificial act as something abhorrent or despicable. In fact, some have even called the sacrificial system a "slaughterhouse religion." First, we must not forget that the Israelites lived in a culture where people raised their own livestock, and killing animals for food was a routine matter of daily life. Yet a main reason God gave His people this system was so they would understand that sin is costly and must be atoned for. Those who brought offerings to the priests were to grasp the fact that there was a price to pay for having sinned and that one cannot lightly enter into the presence of a holy God.

The sacrifices took place in the tabernacle, and later the temple, following a ritual presentation that was often accompanied by a confession of sin. In this way, the spiritual truth of the significance of sacrifice was meant to hit home to the people. They were to comprehend clearly that blood was necessary for atonement.

The Meaning of Atonement

The Hebrew word used most often in the Old Testament for atonement is *kaphar*. The literal meaning of this word is “to cover.” The English word *atone* is a construct of “at one,” signifying that, as a result of Jesus’ actions on our behalf, we are reconciled to, or “at one” with, our heavenly Father. The bloody sacrifice is a covering of sin so that sin no longer stands in the way of our relationship with God.

God's prescribed Sacrifices

In the Levitical system, certain offerings were prescribed by God. Among them were animal sacrifices, such as the burnt offering, the sin offering, the guilt (or trespass) offering, and peace offerings, which were always stated in the plural. Peace offerings were further divided into three: the thank (or praise) offering, the votive (or vow) offering, and the freewill offering. There were also vegetable sacrifices, such as the cereal (or "meat") offering.

Let's briefly look at the practices and meanings of these sacrifices, for they reveal much about how God views our relationship with Him and about the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God on our behalf.

BURNT OFFERING

The most frequently offered sacrifice was the burnt offering, described in detail in Leviticus 1 and Leviticus 6:8-13. The burnt offering was offered daily in the morning and evening and, on certain days, more frequently. *The Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary* explains, "The purpose of the offering was propitiation, but with this idea was united another, the entire consecration of the worshiper to Jehovah....This was the normal sacrifice of the Israelite in proper covenant relationship with God."[1] Offering a further perspective, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* says, "This ritual sets forth Christ offering Himself without spot to God in performing the divine will with joy, even to the point of death."[2]

This sacrifice required a young male animal from the offerer's herd or flock—a bull, ram, lamb, or goat—without any kind of bodily blemish. However, the economic standing of the offerers was taken into consideration, and the very poor could offer birds rather than the more expensive animals.

Unlike the other sacrifices, this one was burned entirely, signifying the person's or congregation's full consecration or surrender to the Lord. That is why it is often called the whole burnt offering. The one bringing the sacrificial animal presented it to the priest at the entrance to the tabernacle (later, the temple).

In the process, the offerer would lay his hand on the head of the animal, symbolizing the transmittal of the person's sin to the animal

substitute. The offerer himself would take a knife and kill the animal. The attending priest would sprinkle the blood upon the altar. Then the person would cut the sacrifice in pieces and present it to the priest for burning. (See Leviticus 1:3-9.)

SIN OFFERING

The sin offering is described in Leviticus 4:1-35 and Leviticus 6:24-30. Generally, it was made by one who had committed sin without realizing, at the time, that what he had done was sinful. It also applied to sins committed unintentionally rather than actively and deliberately. “It was...the offering among the Hebrews in which the ideas of propitiation and of atonement for sin were most distinctly marked. Its presentation presupposed the consciousness of sin on the part of the person presenting it.”[3]

When a sin offering was made for a priest or for the whole congregation of people, the blood of the sacrifice—a young bull—was taken into the Holy Place by the officiating priest and sprinkled seven times in front of the veil of the sanctuary. Some of the blood was placed on the horns of the altar of sweet incense in the tabernacle of meeting. The rest of the blood was poured at the base of the altar of the burnt offering.

If the sin offering was for an individual (other than a priest), the blood of the sacrifice—a female goat—was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, with the remainder poured at the base of the altar.

The fat portions of these sacrifices were burned on the altar. Offerings for priests or the whole congregation were then taken outside the camp and burned. Offerings for individuals were eaten by the priests in the Holy Place. Special instructions applied to the Day of Atonement, which we will review later.

Guilt (Trespass) Offering

The instructions for the guilt or trespass offering are recorded in Leviticus 5:14-6:7. It differed from the sin offering in that it required not only the usual sacrifice, but also the payment of restitution, either to the offended person or to the priests (if the offense was against God). The offending person had to give back the equivalent of what

was taken or lost and add one-fifth of the value to it. “This ritual prefigures Christ’s atoning for the damage of sin....It has in view not so much the guilt of sin, which is the aspect of the sin offering, but rather the injury.”[4] The sacrifice was offered after the restitution had been made.

PEACE OFFERINGS

As I mentioned earlier, the three peace offerings described in Leviticus 3 are the thank (or praise) offering, the votive (or vow) offering, and the freewill offering. The names indicate the purpose of each: to give thanks for some blessing received, to demonstrate that a vow had been fulfilled, or to express gratitude from a glad heart.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says, “These were called peace-offerings because they were offered by those who were at peace with God, to express gratitude and obligation to God, and fellowship with Him. They were not commanded to be offered at any set time, except Pentecost (Lev. 23:20), and were presented spontaneously as the feelings of the worshiper prompted (Lev. 19:5).”[5] *Unger’s* adds how this offering was a forerunner of Christ: “This ritual portrays Christ as our peace.”[6]

Peace offerings were animal sacrifices. The fatty portions were burned on the altar before the Lord and the remaining parts were eaten. The parts of the peace offerings that could be eaten were distributed between the one who brought the offering and the priests who accepted it. Leviticus indicates that the meat from such sacrifices had to be eaten on the same day they were offered in the temple or the next day. (See Leviticus 7:15-17.)

Cereal (“Meat") Offering

The cereal or “meat” offering was an offering of grain. The King James Version lists this offering as “meat” because, in the days when this version of the Bible was translated, the word *meat* meant what we convey today by the word *meal.* Technically, no flesh was required, although" the prescribing verses indicate that the cereal offering often accompanied an animal sacrifice. (See Leviticus 2:1-16 and 6:14-23.) In fact, the cereal offering was made twice daily along with the burnt offerings.

The cereal offering could be brought to the priest in various forms, including cooked cakes or portions of grain. If it were a cooked product, only the finest ingredients could be employed and no leaven or honey was permitted. A token part of it (a handful) was presented to the priest to be burned, and the remainder could be eaten by the priests. The primary purpose of the cereal offering seemed to be to secure or keep the good will of the Lord. Regarding its symbolism in relationship to the Supreme Sacrifice, "this offering exhibits Christ in Elis human perfections tested by suffering. The fine flour represents the sinless humanity of our Lord. The fire is testing by suffering even unto death."[7]

The Meaning of the Sacrifice

The significance of the offering of a sacrifice is captured in Leviticus 1:3-4:

He shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

A certain painful realization must have stricken the one who brought the sacrifice, for he was bringing an animal of superior value that he had raised from its birth. He knew the reason the animal was dying was that he, the offerer, had sinned. His delivering the animal, laying his hand on its head to confer upon it his own sin, presenting it to the priest—this whole series of acts must have reminded him of the terrible price of sin. The sacrificial victim had to die in order for atonement to be made. This is because the life of the flesh is in the blood, and blood must be shed for the remission of sin.

The Role of the Priest

An examination of the sacrificial system is not complete without a consideration of the role of the priest. It was the priest's responsibility to make the congregation aware of its sacrificial duties. The ministry of the priest is contrasted with that of the prophet. While the prophet heard from God and announced to the people what God wished them to hear, the priest's main work was to take the sacrifices of the people and present them to God.

We can picture the prophet with his face turned toward God, listening for His revelation, then turning his face toward the people and proclaiming what God has said. In contrast, we can picture the priest with his face turned toward the people, listening for their confession of sin and receiving their offerings, then turning his face toward God and offering their sacrifices to Him.

The job of the priest was to keep the fire burning on the altar and to sprinkle, apply, and/or pour the blood on the altar and other sacred places. It should be pointed out that the priest himself had to make offerings for his own sin, just as the people did, with one exception. While the people could often eat a portion of the sacrifice they brought, the priest could not eat any part of his own sacrifice. Anything that remained after the prescribed parts had been burned on the altar had to be burned by the priest outside the camp. When we look closely at the sacrificial offering of Jesus Himself and the role He fulfilled as the Great High Priest, it will become even more apparent that these Old Testament types are full of meaning for us.

THE TABERNACLE: A PATTERN OF Heavenly Things

We’ve talked about the various sacrifices and the role of the priest. Now, let’s look at the tabernacle itself (later, the Israelites built the temple for the purpose of worship and sacrifice). The altar of burnt offering was located in the outer court of the tabernacle. Earlier, I mentioned the “horns” of the altar. These were its corners. Inside the tabernacle was the Holy Place, which contained the golden altar of incense.

A veil or curtain separated the Holy Place from the special inner room called the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place. The most sacred part of the Holy of Holies—to God and to man—was the ark of the covenant, also called the ark of testimony. The ark was a rectangular box about forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, inside and outside. The lid to this chest was called the mercy seat or atonement cover.

God instructed Moses to place replicas of two cherubim on each end of the mercy seat, upon which the blood of atonement would be sprinkled. The wings of both were spread forward, and provided a symbolic covering for the atonement. The following are the plans that God gave Moses for the mercy seat.

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:17-22)

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement has special significance within the sacrificial system. The Hebrew word for atonement in this context is *kippur*. Significantly, the *New American Standard Concordance* says that *kippur* is derived from a Hebrew word meaning "the price of a life."[8]

It should be noted that, although the old Jewish system of animal sacrifices has long been discontinued, the Day of Atonement, called *Yom Kippur* today, is still observed as the most holy day in the Jewish religious year.

The Day of Atonement was anything but a celebration: It was a day of travail and repentance. It was a day when the Israelites acknowledged their sins before the Lord and their helplessness to put away their sins. In Leviticus 16, it becomes apparent that the day was significant because it presented an opportunity for everyone, from the high priest to the most common citizen, and even the sanctuary itself, to be presented before God for cleansing.

The central aspect of the Day of Atonement was the offering of two male goats. One was presented as a blood sacrifice, and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat, where the figures of the winged cherubim represented an approach to the throne of God. It was at the mercy seat that the presence of God was manifested. (See Leviticus 16:2.) Where there is atonement, the presence of God can commune with man.

The high priest placed both of his hands on the head of the other goat, representing the transfer of the sins of the people onto the animal. The goat was then led into the wilderness and turned loose. This goat was called the "scapegoat."

In Hebrew, the word for scapegoat is *azazel*. This word has caused great debate among Bible scholars. Some have believed that Azazel was a demon or representative of Satan. It seems more likely, however, that the word simply reflects another word from which it derives. This Hebrew word, *azal,* means "to remove," denoting that the sin of the people has been removed. In fact, one definition given for *azazel* is "entire removal."[9]

The sacrificed goat, the blood of which was sprinkled on the mercy

seat, represents God's covering of sin while the goat that was released into the wilderness represents God's deliverance of His people from sin. Both of them together illustrate the truth that God's atonement is full and complete.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest first atoned for himself and his household, then for the tabernacle, and then for all of Israel. (See Leviticus 16.) This atonement allowed him to gain standing with God and to present the blood at the mercy seat, which would provide for the sins of the people. When the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies to offer the blood for propitiation, the righteous demands of God upon the sinners were satisfied for a period of one year.

The next year, he had to do it all over again.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

Bible scholars who probe the Old Testament sacrificial system tell us that all the blood shed on Jewish altars through the centuries never took away one sin. Yet God commanded this system in order to provide a "covering" for people's sin until the Supreme Sacrifice would be made, which would forever wash away all sins. "[Jesus] *is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:2 KJV).

Even so, every single sacrifice of blood in the Old Testament was a sacred event because of the blood that was shed and poured out on the altar. Each offering was important to God, for each sacrificial animal was an offering, a testimony, and a promise.

- As an offering, each atoning sacrifice covered the sins of the worshiper.
- As a testimony, each sacrifice proclaimed the coming of the true Lamb of God.
- As a promise, each sacrifice pointed to the precious blood of the Lamb of God, which would be sufficient to end all further blood sacrifices.

The blood of Christ alone is sufficient to fully atone for sin. The Old Testament Day of Atonement prefigured the once-for-all sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross. Jesus, our Great High Priest, had no need to offer sacrifice for His own sins, because He was our sinless Sin-bearer. The sacrifice He made of His own blood was presented by Him in the heavenly Holy of Holies, a sacrifice that never needs to be repeated.

In the heavenly Father's perfect timing, Jesus fulfilled every prophecy and every promise of God when He shed His blood for you and me:

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

Hoofstuk 3: Bloed in die Ou- Testamentiese offers

"En byna alles word met bloed gereinig volgens die wet, en sonder bloed- vergieting vind daar geen vergifnis plaas nie."

- Hebreërs 9:22

Die feit dat bloed gestort moet word voordat die mens met God versoen kan word, vorm die kern van die Christelike verlossingsboodskap. Van die eerste verhale van Génesis af tot by die laaste visioene in Openbaring, word hierdie tema herhaaldelik in verskil- lende situasies en op verskillende maniere gesien.

In baie Bybels is die woord Christus in rooi ink gedruk. Daar is ook al gesê dat die hele Bybel in rooi geskryf is - *bloedrooi.* Dit is omdat daar 'n "rooi draad" loop wat deur- getrek kan word van daardie eerste diervelle wat die Here God gebruik het om Adam en Eva se naaktheid te bedek, tot by die Ruiter op die wit perd in die boek Openbaring. Die Bybel sê dat daardie Ruiter se naam *"Getrou en Waaragtig"* is en ons lees ook: *"Hy was bekleed met 'n kleed wat in bloed gedoop was, en sy Naam is: Die Woord van God"* (Openbaring 19:11,13).

In die Ou Testament alleen is daar 'n paar honderd verwysings na bloed - en meer as 'n honderd daarvan verwys na die bloed van offers wat gebring word. Hierdie offers was 'n tipe, 'n heenwysing na die finale en hoogste offer van die sondelose Christus en van die versoening met God
wat deur Sy gestorte bloed bewerkstellig is. Waar die Ou-Testamentiese offers elke dag, elke jaar én met spesiale geleenthede gebring moes word, kon Sy bloed en slegs Sy bloed eens en vir altyd finaal betaal vir die sondes van die ganse mensdom.

Die offerstelsel van die Joodse volk waarvan ons in Exodus en dwarsdeur die Ou Testament lees, is ryk aan simbole. Die Ou-Testamentiese offers is presies en tot in die fynste besonderhede deur die Here God op Sinai aan Moses voorgeskryf. Die offerstelsel sê nie net vir ons dat daar 'n prys vir die sonde betaal moet word nie, maar ook dat daardie prys slegs in bloed betaal kan word. Dit berei ons ook voor om die offer wat Christus gebring het, beter te verstaan.

DIE SONDE VRA 'n PERSOONLIKE PRYS

Bloed het 'n prominente rol gespeel in die bevele wat God in Levítikus oor die offerrituele aan die volk gegee het. As die mense sy opdragte nougeset uitgevoer het, sou hulle liewer offerdiere uit hulle eie kuddes bring, eerder as om hulle te koop. Dit was eers later, toe die tempelaanbidding 'n klug geraak en verval het in leë rituele, dat hulle begin het om hulle offerdiere by die tempel aan te koop (verwys bv. Markus 11:15).

God het egter van die begin af bepaal dat hulle slegs volmaakte

diere wat reeds aan hulle behoort het, moes offer. Dit het die gedagte versterk dat daar 'n persoonlike prys vir die sonde te betaal is.

Baie mense sien vandag net dooie diere waar hulle netjies verpak en verwerk op die rakke van supermarkte lê. Daarom is die blote gedagte aan die offerstelsel iets wat hulle afstoot. Party mense het selfs al gepraat van 'n "slaghuisgodsdiens". Ons moet in die eerste plek onthou dat die Israeliete in 'n kultuur geleef het waar mense hulle eie vee aangehou het en dit was deel van hulle dagtaak om vee vir huisgebruik te slag. Maar die hoofrede waarom die Here die offerstelsel ingestel het, was sodat sy volk kon leer dat die sonde duur is en dat daar 'n prys vir die sonde te betaal is. Elkeen wat 'n offer na die priesters gebring het, moes weet dat daar 'n prys vir die sonde betaal moes word en dat 'n mens nie sommer ligtelik in die teenwoordigheid van die heilige God kon ingaan nie.

Die offers is by die tabernakel en later by die tempel gebring. Daar was 'n hele ritueel wat gevolg moes word en die ritueel het dikwels ook sondebelydenis ingesluit. Die doel daarmee was dat die mense die volle betekenis van die offer kon verstaan. Hulle moes naamlik goed verstaan dat bloed moes vloei sodat hulle sondes vergewe kon word.

DIE BETEKENIS VAN VERSOENING

Die Hebreeuse woord wat die meeste in die Ou Testament vir versoening gebruik word, is *kaphar*. Dit beteken letterlik "om te bedek." Die bloedoffer wat gebring word is 'n bedekking van die sonde, sodat daardie sonde nie meer in die pad staan van ons verhouding met God nie.

GOD SE VOORGESKREWE OFFERS

Daar is sekere voorgeskrewe offers in die Levítiese stelsel. Onder hulle was daar diere-offers, soos byvoorbeeld die brandoffer, die sonde-offer, die skuldoffer en vredesoffers. Vredesoffers is verder in drie verdeel: die lofoffer, die dank- offer en die vrywillige offer. Dan was daar ook groente- offers soos die graanoffers, wat ook spysoffers genoem is.

Kom ons kyk kortliks na die verskillende offers en hulle betekenisse, want hulle sê vir ons iets omtrent God se siening van ons verhouding met Hom en leer ook vir ons meer omtrent die soenoffer van die Lam van God.

DIE BRANDOFFER

Die brandoffer is die een waarvan ons die heel meeste in die Ou Testament lees. Dit word volledig in Levítikus 1 en Levítikus 6:8-13 beskryf. Brandoffers is soggens en saans gebring, asook deur die dag op bepaalde dae. Die *Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary* verduidelik: "Die

doel met hierdie offer was versoening, maar daar was ook 'n ander idee daaraan gekoppel, naamlik die wyding van die aan- bidder aan God ... dit was die normale offer van die Israeliet wat in die regte verhouding met God geleef het." *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* werp nog meer lig op die saak: "Hierdie ritueel wys heen na Christus wat Homself vlekkeloos aan God geoffer het en so die goddelike wil nagekom het, selfs al het dit Sy dood beteken."

Hierdie offer het vereis dat 'n jong, manlike dier uit die gelowige se kudde doodgemaak moes word - 'n bul, ram, lam of bok. Dit moes 'n dier sonder enige gebrek wees. God het egter sy volk se finansiële toestand ook in ag geneem en dié wat baie arm was, kon voëls in die plek van diere offer.

Anders as die ander offers, is hierdie hele offer verbrand as 'n teken dat die individu of gemeente hom of hulle geheel en al aan God wou wy of onderwerp. Dit is dan ook waarom dit soms die volle brandoffer genoem word. Die een wat die offer gebring het, het dit by die ingang tot die tabernakel (en later die tempel) aan die priester getoon. In die proses sou die gelowige sy hand op die kop van die offerdier sit as simbool dat hy sy sondes aan die dier oordra. Daarna sou hy self 'n mes neem en die dier doodmaak. Die priester sou dan die bloed op die altaar sprinkel. Daarna sou die persoon die offer in stukke sny en aan die priester gee om te verbrand (verwys Levítikus 1:3-9).

DIE SONDE-OFFER

Die sonde-offer word in Levítikus 4:1-35 en Levítikus 6:24- 30 beskryf. So 'n offer is gewoonlik gebring deur iemand wat sonde gedoen het sonder om op die oomblik te besef dat wat hy doen, 'n sonde was. Dit was ook van toepassing op sondes wat nie doelbewus gedoen is nie. "Dit was ... die Hebreeuse offer waarin die idees van versoening en boete- doening vir die sonde die sterkste na vore gekom het. Hierdie offer het die bewustheid van sonde aan die kant van die persoon wat die offer gebring het, veronderstel" (Merrill F Unger in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary)*.

As 'n sonde-offer vir 'n priester of vir 'n hele gemeente gebring is, is die bloed van die offerdier - 'n jong bul - deur die priester in die Heilige ingeneem en sewe keer voor die voorhangsel gesprinkel. 'n Deel van die bloed is aan die horings van die reukaltaar aangebring en die res is onder- aan die brandofferaltaar gegiet.

As die sonde-offer vir 'n individu (nie 'n priester nie) gebring is, is die bloed van die offerdier ('n bokooi) aan die horings van die brandofferaltaar aangebring en is die res van die bloed onderaan die altaar uitgegiet.

Die vet van die offers is op die altaar verbrand. Offers vir priesters

of vir die hele gemeente is dan buite die kamp verbrand. Offers vir ander individue is deur die priesters in die Heilige geëet. Daar was spesiale voorskrifte vir die Versoendag - ons kom later daarby.

DIE SKULDOFFER

Ons lees in Levítikus 5:14-6:7 meer oor die skuldoffer. Dit het van die sonde-offer verskil, aangesien dit nie net die gewone offer van die skuldige vereis het nie, maar ook nog 'n skuldbetaling wat gemaak moes word aan die persoon wat te na gekom is, of aan die priesters, as dit teen God is wat die sonde was. Die skuldige moes terugbetaal wat geneem is of wat verlore geraak het en daarby ook nog een vyfde addisioneel. "Hierdie ritueel is 'n heenwysing na Christus se boetedoening vir die skade wat die sonde gedoen het ... dit fokus nie soseer op die skuld van die sonde nie, maar eerder op die skade wat berokken is" (Merrill F Unger in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary)*. Die offer is dan ook gebring nadat die skadevergoeding betaal is.

VREDESOFFERS

Soos ek vroeër gesê het, is die drie vredesoffers wat in Levítikus 3 beskryf word, die lofoffer, die dankoffer en die vrywillige offer. Die eerste, die lofoffer, is om God te loof en te dank vir die een of ander seën wat ontvang is. Die tweede is om te demonstreer dat 'n gelofte vervul is en die derde is om 'n blye hart se dankbaarheid teenoor God te toon.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary sê: "*Hulle is vredes- offers genoem, omdat hulle gebring is deur mense wat in vrede met God geleef het en wat hulle dankbaarheid teenoor Hom wou toon en met Hom gemeenskap wou hê. Daar was geen voorgeskrewe tye waarop hierdie offers gebring moes word nie, behalwe op Paasfees (Levítikus 23:20) en dit is spontaan gebring soos wat die gelowige daarna gevoel het*" (Levítikus 19:5). *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* voeg by dat hierdie offer 'n heenwysing is na Christus as ons vrede.

Vredesoffers was diere-offers. Die vet is op die altaar verbrand en die oorblywende dele is geëet. Die dele wat geëet kon word, is verdeel tussen die een wat die offer gebring het en die priesters wat die offer ontvang het. Levítikus dui aan dat die vleis van vredesoffers op dieselfde dag of op die volgende dag nog geëet moes word (verwys Levítikus 7:15-17).

DIE GRAANOFFER (SPYSOFFER)

Die spysoffer was 'n graanoffer. Hoewel dit nie nodig was om vleis daarmee saam te offer nie, het die graanoffer dikwels wél met 'n diere-offer gepaard gegaan (verwys Levítikus 2:1-16 en 6:14-23). Graanoffers is tweekeer per dag saam met die brandoffers gebring.

Die graanoffer kon in verskeie vorms na die priesters toe geneem word, soos byvoorbeeld in die vorm van porsies graan of van gebakte koeke. As dit 'n gaar produk was, was net die beste bestanddele toelaatbaar - en geen suurdeeg of heuning kon gebruik word nie. 'n Handvol is aan die
priesters gegee om verbrand te word en die res is dan deur die priesters geëet. Die hoofdoel van die graanoffer was skynbaar om die guns van die Here te behou. Wat die simboliek hiervan met betrekking tot Christus se offer aan betref, "het hierdie offer Christus in sy menslike volmaaktheid, soos wat Hy deur lyding beproef is, voorgehou. Die goeie meel verteenwoordig die sondelose menslikheid van ons Here. Die vuur is beproewing deur lyding - ja, beproewing tot die dood toe" (Merrill F Unger in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary)*.

DIE BETEKENIS VAN DIE OFFER

Ons lees in Levítikus 1:3-4 wat dit beteken het om 'n offer te bring:
"By die ingang van die tent van samekoms moet hy dit bring, sodat hy welgevalle voor die aangesig van die Here kan vind. En hy moet sy hand op die kop van die brandoffer lê, dan sal dit vir hom met welgevalle aangeneem word om versoening vir hom te doen."
Dit was seker nie vir die gelowige lekker om te weet dat dié vlekkelose dier wat hy van sy geboorte af reeds grootgemaak het, moes sterf omdat hy gesondig het nie. Die feit dat hy, met die aanbied van die dier aan die priester, sy hand op die dier se kop moes lê, het hom sekerlik ook aan die geweldige prys van die sonde herinner. Die offerdier moes sterf sodat daar versoening kon wees. Dit is omdat die lewe van die vlees in die bloed is en bloed gestort moet word vir die vergifnis van sonde.

DIE ROL VAN DIE PRIESTER

'n Studie van die offerstelsel sal nie volledig wees sonder om ook te kyk na die rol van die priester nie. Dit was die priester se verantwoordelikheid om te sorg dat die gemeente moes weet wat hulle verpligtinge ten opsigte van die offers was. Die bediening van die priester verskil van dié van die profeet. Waar die profeet van God gehoor en sy boodskap aan die mense oorgedra het, was dit die hooftaak van die priester om die offers van die mense aan te neem en hulle aan God te bied.

Ons kan die profeet voor ons geestesoog sien met sy gesig na God gedraai, wagtend op wat die Here vir hom wil sê sodat hy dit weer aan die mense kan oordra. In teen- stelling daarmee, kan ons die priester sien met sy gesig na die mense gekeer, waar hy luister na hulle skuldbelydenis en dan sy gesig na God wend en die offers aan Hom opdra.

Dit was ook die priester se taak om die vuur op altaar aan die gang te hou en om bloed op die altaar en die ander gewyde plekke aan te bring, te sprinkel of uit te giet. Dit is ook belangrik om te verstaan dat die priester, net soos die ander mense, offers vir sy eie sondes moes bring - met één uitsondering. Waar die mense dikwels 'n porsie van die offers wat hulle gebring het, kon eet, kon die priester geen deel van sy eie offers eet nie. Alle dele wat oorgebly het na- dat 'n priester die voorgeskrewe dele van sy offer op die altaar verbrand het, moes buite die kamp verbrand word. As ons noukeurig let op die offer wat Jesus gebring het en die rol wat Hy as die groot Hoëpriester vervul het, dan word dit des te meer duidelik dat hierdie Ou-Testamentiese simbole vir ons baie betekenis inhou.

DIE TABERNAKEL: 'n PATROON VAN HEMELSE DINGE

Ons het nou reeds gekyk na die verskillende offers en die rol van die priester. Kom ons kyk nou na die tabernakel self. (Later het die Israeliete 'n tempel gebou om in te aan- bid en hulle offers te bring.) Die brandofferaltaar was in die voorhof van die tabernakel geleë. Ek het vroeër reeds na die altaar se "horings" verwys. Dit was die hoeke van die altaar. Binne-in die tabernakel was die Heilige en daarbinne was die goue reukofferaltaar.

'n Gordyn of voorhangsel het die Heilige van die Allerheiligste geskei. Die heel heiligste deel in die Allerheiligste vir God én vir die mens - was die verbondsark. Dit was 'n reghoekige kis van sowat 112,5cm by 67,5cm en dit was so (67,5cm hoog. Dit was van akasiahout gemaak en van binne en buite met suiwer goud oorgetrek. Die verbondsark se deksel is die versoendeksel genoem.

God het Moses beveel om afbeeldings van twee gérubs aan weerskante van die versoendeksel aan te bring. Die bloed van versoening sou daarop gesprinkel word. Albei se vlerke was vorentoe gesprei en het simbolies 'n bedekking vir die versoening gebied. Dít is wat God vir Moses oor die versoendeksel gesê het:

"Maak ook 'n versoendeksel van suiwer goud. Twee en 'n half el moet sy lengte, en anderhalf el sy breedte wees. Maak ook twee gérubs van goud. Van dryfwerk moet jy hulle maak, aan die twee ente van die versoendeksel. En maak een gérub aan die een ent en een gérub aan die ander ent. Uit een stuk, saam met die versoendeksel, moet julle die gérubs maak, aan die twee ente. En die gérubs moet die vlerke boontoe uitgesprei hou, terwyl hulle met hul vlerke die versoendeksel beskut; en hulle aangesigte moet na mekaar toe wees; die gesigte van die gérubs moet op die versoen- deksel gerig wees. En sit die versoendeksel bo-op die ark; maar in die ark moet jy die Getuienis neerlê wat Ek aan jou sal gee. En daar sal Ek met jou saamkom, en van die versoendeksel af tussen die twee gérubs uit wat op die ark van

die Getuienis is, sal Ek jou alles sê wat Ek jou vir die kinders van Israel sal beveel" (Exodus 25:17-22).

DIE GROOT VERSOENDAG

Die Groot Versoendag het 'n baie spesiale betekenis in die hele offerstelsel. Die Hebreeuse woord vir versoening is *kippoer*. Die New American Standard Concordance sê dat *kippoer* afgelei is van 'n Hebreeuse woord wat beteken "die prys van 'n lewe." Dit is ook betekenisvol dat, hoewel die ou Joodse offerstelsel nie meer in gebruik is nie, die Groot Versoendag, oftewel Joom Kippoer, steeds as die heiligste dag op die Joodse kalender gevier word.

Die Groot Versoendag was beslis nie 'n feestelike dag nie. Dit was 'n dag van sondeberou. Dit was 'n dag waarop die Israeliete hulle sondes voor die Here erken het en teenoor Hom bely het dat hulle hulpeloos was om self iets omtrent hulle sondes te doen. Dit blyk duidelik uit Levítikus 16 dat die dag baie betekenisvol was, aangesien dit 'n geleentheid gebied het aan elkeen - van die hoëpriester af tot die nederigste Hebreër - en selfs die heiligdom - om voor God gereinig te word.

Die middelpunt van die Groot Versoendag se verloop, was die offer van twee bokramme. Die een is as 'n bloedoffer aangebied en sy bloed is in die Allerheiligste ingeneem en op die versoendeksel gesprinkel, waar die beelde van die tweede gevleuelde gérubs simbolies die weg na God aangewys het. Die teenwoordigheid van God is by die versoendeksel geopenbaar (verwys Levítikus 16:2). Waar daar versoening is, kan daar ook gemeenskap wees tussen die teenwoordigheid van God en die mens.

Die hoëpriester het albei sy hande op die ander bok se kop gesit om die oordra van die mense se sondes na die bok te simboliseer. Dié bok is dan buite die kamp uitgelei en losgelaat en het as die "sondebok" bekendgestaan.

In Hebreeus is die woord vir sondebok *azazel*. Dié term het al heelwat debat onder Bybelkundiges ontlok. Sommiges glo dat *Azazel* 'n demoon was of die Satan verteenwoordig. Dit skyn egter meer waarskynlik te wees dat die woord maar net 'n ander woord, waarvan dit afgelei is, verteenwoordig. Die Hebreeuse woord *azal* beteken "om te verwyder", dus kan dit beteken dat die sondes van die mense verwyder is. Een definisie vir *azazel* kan dus wees "om volkome of heeltemal te verwyder."

Die geofferde bok - die een wie se bloed oor die versoen- deksel gesprinkel is - verteenwoordig die feit dat God die sondes van die mense bedek. Die ander bok - die sondebok - simboliseer die feit dat God sy volk van sonde verlos het. Saam illustreer hulle die feit dat God se versoening volkome en volmaak is.

Op die Groot Versoendag het die hoëpriester eers versoening vir homself en sy familie bewerkstellig, daarna vir die tabernakel en daarna vir die hele Israel (verwys Levítikus 16). Hierdie versoening het hom in staat gestel om voor God te verskyn en die bloed oor die versoendeksel te sprinkel, sodat dit vir die sondes van die hele volk sou geld. As die hoëpriester dan in die Allerheiligste ingegaan het om die bloed vir versoening te offer, is daar só vir 'n tydperk van een jaar aan die eise van die regverdige God voldoen.

Die volgende jaar - op die Groot Versoendag - moes die hele proses dan weer herhaal word.

IN DIE VOLHEID VAN DIE TYD

Bybelkundiges wat die Ou-Testamentiese offerstelsel bestudeer, sê vir ons dat al die bloed wat op die Joodse altaars gestort is, nie 'n enkele sonde weggeneem het nie. Tog het God beveel dat dié stelsel onderhou moes word sodat die mense se sondes "bedek" kon word totdat die volkome en volmaakte offer gebing kon word en dit alle sondes sou wegneem. "En Hy *(Jesus) is 'n versoening vir ons sondes, en nie alleen vir ons s'n nie, maar ook vir dié van die hele wêreld"* (1 Johannes 2:2).

Nietemin was elke bloedoffer wat in die Ou Testament gebring is, 'n heilige gebeurtenis, as gevolg van die bloed wat gestort en oor die altaar uitgegiet is. Elke offer was vir God belangrik, want elke offerdier was 'n offer, 'n getuienis en 'n belofte.

- As 'n offer het dit die sondes van die gelowige bedek.
- As 'n getuienis het dit heengewys na die koms van die ware Lam van God.
- As 'n belofte het elke offer heengewys na die kosbare bloed van die Lam van God wat voldoende sou wees en 'n einde sou maak aan alle verdere offers.

Slegs die bloed van Christus is voldoende om ten volle vir die sonde te betaal. Die Ou-Testamentiese Versoendag was 'n heenwysing na die volkome en volmaakte offer wat Jesus aan die kruis gebring het. Jesus, ons groot Hoë- priester, het nie nodig gehad om 'n offer vir Sy eie sondes te bring nie, want Hy was ons sondelose sondedraer. Die offer wat Hy in Sy eie bloed gebring het, is in die hemelse Allerheiligste deur Hom aangebied, en hoef nooit, ooit weer herhaal te word nie.

Jesus het in die hemelse Vader se volmaakte tydsbestel elke profesie en elke belofte van God vervul toe Hy Sy bloed vir jou en my gestort het:

"Maar toe die volheid van die tyd gekom het, het God sy Seun uitgestuur, gebore uit 'n vrou, gebore onder die wet, om die wat onder die wet was, los te koop, sodat ons die aanneming tot kinders kan ontvang" (Galásiërs

4:4-5).

Chapter 4: The One Sacrifice

"By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

—Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

Everywhere I go today, I meet people who are experiencing a sense of lostness. Not only do they lack meaning in their lives, but they also feel a kind of desolation in their souls. Throughout the centuries, most men and women have felt this same deep sense of being lost and alone. At times, they feel as if they are a million miles away from God.

Regardless of their religions and whether or not they will admit it, many people seek to make peace with God through sacrifice and works. Even pagans in foreign lands instinctively seek reconciliation with deity. Whatever gods people around the world may worship, their worship usually involves some kind of sacrificial ritual to gain the gods' favor. People's consciences seem to cry out for a way to reach their Creator.

This sense of lostness comes from the fact that they are unable to be reconciled to God on their own. They need a Mediator. Let's look more closely at why Jesus' sacrifice is the only way we can be restored to God.

THE INADEQUACY OF THE OLD COVENANT

Although the Mosaic sacrificial system was given to the Israelites, its truths are applicable to all people. The sacrifices, the priests, the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, and other aspects of the tabernacle were only earthly copies of the heavenly reality that had not yet been manifested. (See Hebrews 8:4-5.)

Into the second part [of the tabernacle] *the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience; concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.*

(Hebrews 9:7-10)

The first covenant, based on people's obedience to the law and the offering of animal sacrifices, was inferior to the second covenant that came through Jesus Christ and is based on grace and faith. *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17).

The old covenant of the law could never do the job of reconciling man to God and cleansing him from the awful stain of sin that has blighted the human race. Its purpose was to remind people of their sin while demonstrating the consequences of sin.

The Lord gave a clear, concise, and strongly worded proclamation about the consequences of sin when He said through the prophet Ezekiel, *"The soul who sins shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:20). God's justice and holiness would not allow Him to forgive sin by simply issuing a divine decree. He does not merely look down and say, "Your intentions were good, so it's all right," or "Because you've done a lot of good things this past week, I'll overlook your sins and let them slide by this time."

Once I had a vision of God in His purity and majesty. The pristine sight was truly awesome. As wave after wave of His glory swept over me, I had a sense of the true holiness of God. I came to realize that God's holiness will not allow Him to overlook sin. The Bible says, *"For*

the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Yet my death or your death will not suffice to pay the debt we owe God or to atone for our sins. Neither the blood of animals nor any human effort at salvation is enough. The only sacrifice qualified to pay for our sins and reconcile us to God is the perfect blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

The sacrificial system is also meant to point people to their need for reconciliation and communion with God. If the sinner himself is not to die for his sins and is not to remain separated from God, then a representative must bear the sinner's death. This is the heart of the message of the sacrificial system.

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

One of the great deficiencies of the sacrificial system was its temporariness. A sacrifice availed for a sin, but if a sin was repeated, a new sacrifice had to be presented at the altar. Perhaps no fuller explanation of the necessity of the blood sacrifice of Christ is offered than in the following passages:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. (Hebrews 8:7)

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me."...Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

(Hebrews 10:4-5, 8-9)

THE BLOOD OF JESUS PAID THE PRICE

The Old Testament high priest and the tabernacle were cleansed ceremonially with blood. On the Day of Atonement every year, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies with a basin of blood to sprinkle afresh the mercy seat. This was a type or forerunner of what Jesus would do through His death on the cross.

It was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Hebrews 9:23-24)

Jesus' death on the cross was superior to the blood of thousands upon thousands of sacrificial animals. (See Micah 6:7.) His high priestly work in mediating between God and man is superior to all the priests of all the ages combined.

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
(Hebrews 9:11-15)

In the United States, people ratify agreements with their signatures. Then, we have witnesses sign the agreements that we have made. Finally, we often have the documents' notarized. In a spiritual sense, God has verified, ratified, and notarized His agreement with us in blood—the blood of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

The blood of the sacrifice served as a propitiation for sin. *"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins* of the whole world" *(1 John 2:2 kjv). "To propitiate" means to conciliate or appease or make favorably inclined. This was the purpose of the sacrifice*

of the blood, and it satisfied the requirements of a righteous God. Because of God's great love for us, He provided payment for our sin. The blood of Jesus Christ pays our debt in full!

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26 NIV)

Let's take a closer look at how Jesus paid the debt that no one else could pay and made atonement for our sins, enabling us to have eternal life.

HISTORICAL CALVARY

Each year, thousands of tourists visit Jerusalem and walk the streets where Jesus once walked. Tour guides usually lead visitors to the Garden Tomb, which many believe is the place where Jesus arose from the dead. After touring a garden of olive trees, you are led along a path to an observation platform that overlooks the streets of the ancient city of Jerusalem.

Your attention is then immediately drawn to a hill and a cliff to the left of the platform. The cliff has several physical indentations, and its dark shadows give it the unmistakable appearance of a skull. There, the guide tells you, is what is known as Calvary or, in the Hebrew, *Golgotha.*

In Jesus' day, just the mention of Calvary likely struck fear in the hearts of people, especially lawbreakers, for Calvary was a place of execution (in the same way that the electric chair, the gas chamber, or lethal injection causes fear in lawbreakers today). Two thousand years ago, that small hill apparently held an important place in the Roman punitive system. It was one of many sites where the Romans used to carry out capital punishment in the form of crucifixion, one of the most excruciating ways a person can die. Through many torturous hours—even days—of suffering, the condemned person hung between heaven and earth, suspended by nails driven through his flesh.

Atop that relatively small hill, there is a cemetery with various monuments erected in memory of the people buried there. To modern-day Hebrews, Calvary is simply a place to bury the dead. Muslims, the followers of Islam, call it the place where the lesser prophet, Jesus, suffered at the hands of infidels.

To some atheists and secularists, Calvary is the object of jokes, a place of ridicule. To rationalists, Calvary is merely the place where a historical figure named Jesus died. While they may admit that His death was perhaps tragic, they assign no spiritual significance to it. They reason, "He must not have been the Son of God, since God cannot die. If Jesus' body could not be found, then either Jesus did not die but was only badly injured and later regained consciousness, or His disciples stole His body and hid it, afterward claiming that Jesus was resurrected."

Yet, in our heavenly Father's grand design, Calvary was the setting for a world-changing reconciliation between God and humanity. He chose to make that small hill an altar on which the supreme sacrifice would be made. In His divine and mysterious wisdom, He made it the place at which the Son of God shed His blood for the total remission of our sins.

To those who have been forgiven and adopted as children of God, Calvary is hallowed ground. It was there that the Son of God purchased their redemption for all of eternity. It stands forever as a reminder of His sufferings and complete sacrifice on their behalf.

The Sufferings of Jesus

Agony of Soul

In chapter one, I mentioned part of the vision of the crucifixion that was revealed to me. God also allowed me to see Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane where He prayed the evening before His death. The Scripture says, *"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44). I heard Jesus tell His disciples, *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death"* (Matthew 26:38).

I could see and sense the extreme heaviness of His mission; the weight of it rested upon His shoulders. I believe He was able to endure such a heavy load only because He was the Son of God. He bore the load well! But as the Son of Man, His body was weak, and the stress had begun to take its toll on Him. This was only the beginning, however, for not only would He be put to death, but He would also suffer in many other ways before His crucifixion.

Betrayal

In the vision, I encountered many of the central figures involved in the crucifixion. Judas was the worst of all those I saw in the vision because he had been a disciple of Jesus for three-and-a-half years, only to become a traitor because of greed. For only thirty silver coins, Judas betrayed the Lord to those who were trying to kill Him. According to the Bible, Satan had entered into Judas Iscariot's heart (Luke 22:3).

Judas' method of betrayal was horrible and repugnant. He led the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders, along with a large crowd of people, to the place where Jesus was praying. As he drew close to Jesus, he kissed Him. Jesus asked, *"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"* (Luke 22:48). God's Son suffered the betrayal of one who had been in His closest inner circle.

I also encountered the chief priests and scribes. The Bible says that, just before Jesus was crucified, they *"sought how they might kill* [Jesus]" (Luke 22:2). These religious leaders, who were revered and respected by the Israelite people, became the first voices to call for

Jesus' execution. They were the first of the hundreds of people who would eventually make up a bloodthirsty throng clamoring for His crucifixion.

BEATEN AND MOCKED

I also witnessed another part of Jesus' suffering: He was brutally beaten by His captors. I saw this group of religious leaders take Christ to the home of the high priest. They began to interrogate Him. They placed a blindfold on Him and hit Him with their fists. As they did this, they would demand of Him, *"Prophesy! Who is the one who struck You?"* (Luke 22:64). This beating continued through the night.

When dawn came, the religious leaders held a council. They falsely accused Jesus and finally made the pronouncement that He was guilty of blasphemy. Then they took Him to Pilate, the Roman procurator.

When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, another Roman official in Jerusalem, because Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction. After mocking Jesus, Herod put a regal-looking robe on Him and returned Him to Pilate. The Scriptures tell us that on that day, Pilate and Herod, who had been mutual enemies, became friends (Luke 23:12). They were diabolically united in friendship through the agony they imposed on Jesus.

FALSELY CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Pilate eventually took Jesus before the religious leaders and the people. He was convinced that Jesus was innocent and wanted to free Him. However, he was obviously torn between a desire to do the right thing and a desire to please the people.

I saw Pilate lift his hand before the multitude, and there was silence. Pilate asked the crowd in clear tones what he should do with Jesus. The chief priests stirred up the multitude. Whipped into a frenzied mob, the people began crying aloud, *"Crucify Him!"* (See, for example, Mark 15:13.)

In a futile attempt to rid himself of the responsibility for Jesus' death, Pilate washed his hands in a basin and said, *"You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him"* (John 19:6).

Pilate then sentenced Jesus to death and had Him whipped before

handing Him over to be crucified. I saw the Roman soldier raise the atrocious whip and strike it fiercely and forcefully across Jesus' back.

Cruelly Scourged

Roman scourging was an extreme form of punishment. The prisoner was bound to a post with his arms tied above his head. The Roman soldiers who did the whipping were typically well practiced in their craft. They were adept at inflicting the maximum pain.

The whip they used was similar to a cat- o'-nine-tails, although, instead of knots, the bands of leather had pieces of jagged metal or shards of bone tied to them. Each blow would bring angry red welts to the surface of the skin immediately. The pieces of metal or shards of bone would lacerate the swollen skin, digging ever deeper into the flesh. When the scourging finally stopped, strips of torn flesh would hang from the person's back, and he would have lost a great amount of blood.

RIDICULED AND ABUSED

Pilate finally turned Jesus over to be executed. The entire garrison of Roman soldiers gathered around Jesus and ridiculed Him because of His claim to be the King of the Jews. They stripped Him, put a scarlet robe around His shoulders, and placed a reed in His hand. Then I saw His tormentors take a long strand of prickly, thorny vines and twist it into a gruesome crown of thorns. Kneeling before Him in irreverence, they gave Him mock homage. The spitting soldiers screamed in His face.

I watched in horror as they placed that sharp crown of thorns on Jesus' head and pushed it down hard. When they tired of this, one of the soldiers grabbed the reed and began beating the thorns deeper into Jesus' scalp! Here is how the Bible describes the gruesome scene:

When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

(Matthew 27:29-31)

Both Pilate and Herod had opportunities to release Jesus when they saw that He had done nothing deserving of death. However, they were swayed by popular opinion, and they would not free Him.

Roman soldiers scourged Jesus while the Jewish religious leaders cried, “Crucify Him!” A Roman leader condemned Him to death while the mob cried, “Crucify Him!” (See verses 20, 22-23 NIV.)

All this is what Jesus suffered even before He went to the cross. It grieves my heart to think of the motley crew involved in the events that led to the death of Jesus. The chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin Court were all a party to getting the Roman rulers to sentence Jesus to death and to carry out the execution.

Together, they incited the mobs of common people in the streets of Jerusalem to cry out for His death.

Jew and Gentile, lord and servant, ruler and peasant—they were all united in calling for the blood of Jesus to be shed. People sometimes debate who was really responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Yet, if you were to try to establish a culprit, you would be hard-pressed to find a single person or group with more culpability than any other. You could blame Judas, Pilate, the members of the Sanhedrin Court, the Romans, or the mob of people, but it was a joint effort between all of them—and us.

The Scriptures confirm this truth, for it was to pay for our sins that Jesus went to that cross:

It is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12)

No one person or group was more responsible than the others for the death of Christ. Just as all are guilty of sin, so all are responsible for the shedding of Christ’s blood on Calvary.

The visions that God gave to me of the crucifixion are just as real in my mind and heart as ever. The finger of God has etched the scenes of His death there. Two thousand years have passed since that terrible day. We are two millennia separated from its horrors. Still, in my heart, I know that you and I are as responsible for Jesus’ death as those who actually carried it out.

Crucified

The concept of the crucifixion that many people have is of Jesus hanging on the cross. They know that is how He died, but they are not

familiar with the true agony of such a death.

In the vision, I saw four men holding Jesus' limbs while a fifth soldier drove the spikes through His flesh and into the cross. Jesus' limbs were not stretched out completely, but He was allowed a little room for movement. I learned later that this was not out of pity, but to make His sufferings more extreme.

When a person was suspended on a cross, his weight would come to rest on the nails in his hands and feet. The weight pulling on the nails in his hands would soon become unbearable, so he would have to push himself upward to relieve the pain in his hands. Yet this would push upon the painful nails in his feet. When this became too painful, He would again have to let his weight hang on his hands. Hours and days of this merciless cycle produced excruciating agony.

Every movement Jesus made would also have scraped the torn and tattered flesh of His back across the rough, splintered texture of the cross. There was no comfort, only deepening levels of pain.

His chest and abdominal muscles—the parts of the body that control breathing— would essentially become paralyzed while he hung in that position. So the condemned man had no choice but to once again push on the nails in his feet to relieve the strain and catch his breath.

Ultimately, death usually came to a crucifixion victim through suffocation. The person would grow weaker as time passed, and a final horror would overtake him. Exhausted, the crucified man would become too weak to push himself up to relieve the pain in his hands, and he would find himself unable to breathe.

Added to all the above was the additional mocking that Jesus underwent even while He was in such physical agony:

[The soldiers] *divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: This Is the King of the Jews. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."*
(Luke 23:34-39)

Again, the crucifixion process could last for days. If the officials wanted to hasten the death of a crucified person, however, his legs were broken so that he could no longer push on the nails in his feet and thus catch his breath. Jesus was crucified alongside the two criminals, and the religious leaders did not want their bodies to stay on the crosses during the special Sabbath that was to be observed the next day. Therefore, they asked Pilate to grant permission for their legs to be broken. He agreed, but when the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead, so they did not break His legs. (See John 19:31-33.)

To ensure that Jesus was dead, however, a Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side, and out of the wound came both blood and water, a sign of death.[1] The Bible tells us,

These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not one of His bones shall be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John 19:36-37)

The horrors of the crucifixion must have been even worse than the terrible suffering I witnessed in my visions. We must always keep in mind that Jesus endured these sufferings for us so that we can be forgiven, restored to a relationship with God, and enjoy abundant and eternal life.

BURDENED WITH THE WEIGHT OF SIN

Jesus volunteered His body, mind, and spirit to the suffering of the cross. Some people consider only the physical suffering He went through. Jesus endured terrible physical pain, but it was probably less painful than the other agony He experienced.

As He hung on the cross, Jesus felt the excruciating weight of the sins of every person who has ever lived. We need to remember that Jesus Christ never committed a sin and that all our sin and evil came to rest on Him at one time. This would be more than any normal person could endure. Also, because God is holy, and sin is abhorrent to Him, the Father withdrew from His Son for the first time ever when Jesus was on the cross. He experienced the desolation of separation from God, just as the rest of mankind has. Jesus was completely alone!

Jesus Fulfilled the Requirements of an Atoning Sacrifice

A Sacrifice of Priceless Value

In the last chapter, we saw that someone who offered a sacrifice under the old covenant had to present an animal or vegetable product of value that personally belonged to him. In making the supreme sacrifice on our behalf, Jesus offered the most precious thing that belonged to Him—His very life.

My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father. (John 10:17-18)

Christ was not merely a victim of hateful and jealous men, as some believe. Rather, He consciously and willingly *gave up* His life for us. The cross is the centerpiece of God's eternal plan of redemption. Our heavenly Father not only foresaw Calvary, but He also arranged it. Wicked men, no matter how many in number or strength, could never have nailed the Son of God to the cross without the heavenly Father's express permission and the Son's willingness.

A PURE SACRIFICE

Recall also that the sacrifices of the Mosaic system had to be without blemish. Jesus, as our ultimate Sacrifice and Substitute, also had to be totally pure, and He was sinless before God when He offered Himself as our substitute. Many Scriptures testify to His purity and holiness before God and the world, such as the following:

[Jesus said,] *"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?"* (John 8:46 NIV)

[Jesus] *committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.* (1 Peter 2:22)

He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

The blood of Jesus is perfect. It is the blood of God's only begotten Son, the God-man, Christ Jesus.

Christ Jesus…, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in

appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
(Philippians 2:5-8)

Christ's blood represents the perfect and completed sacrifice of Himself, which was offered for the sins of the world. Everything about Christ's life was pure—it did not have a single spot or stain of sin. His obedience to God was perfect. He was the only acceptable Sacrifice that could atone for the sins of the people.

You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world. (1 Peter 1:18-20)

A Sacrifice brought Outside the City

In addition, Jesus satisfied the requirements of an atoning sacrifice in that He was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem. As the Scripture says,

For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. (Hebrews 13:11-12)

The greatest donation of blood in history took place on the cross of Calvary two thousand years ago. Only the blood of Jesus can give a transfusion of eternal life! The blood that was shed on that day has been sufficient for the salvation of every sinner ever born and will continue to be effective until the end of time.

A SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

Another major way that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of an atoning sacrifice is that His death was completely substitutionary. It was effected to satisfy God's demand for righteousness and justice. His blood completely satisfied that demand and effectively put away sin.

When we talk about the death of Jesus Christ as substitutionary, this means that Jesus Christ died *in the place of* sinners. The word *substitutionary* is not found in the Bible, just as the word *evangelism* is not found there. But the concept is one that is repeated throughout the Scriptures.

When Jesus atoned for sin, He stood in the place of guilty men and

women. Thus, God the Father planned for Jesus *"who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Again, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was not the punishment of a criminal or the death of a martyr. It was substitutionary. *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit"* (1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus had no sins of His own. He died for us, in place of us, on behalf of us. He died for us all, taking the punishment that we deserved.

In Hebrews 9:5, the Greek word translated *"mercy seat,"* referring to the place of God's presence in the tabernacle, is the same word that is used for *propitiation.* It is altogether proper to render it in this way because the law required death for sin, and when the blood was placed on the mercy seat, it was a demonstration that death had taken place and the satisfactory price had been paid.

The sacrifice of Jesus' blood is entirely sufficient to purge our sins and give us new life. Hebrews tells us,

We *have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all....For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*

(Hebrews 10:10, 14)

One of the great object lessons of Scripture that reveals the efficacy of the substitutionary blood of Jesus is the story of the Pass-over. Egypt's refusal to obey God resulted in His decision to require the life of every firstborn Egyptian. God's plan to keep death from affecting the firstborn children of the Israelites was called the Passover.

Each Hebrew family was to kill a lamb and apply its blood above the entrance and on either side of the doors to their homes. Even those many centuries before the New Testament era, the sign of the cross would be efficacious in keeping the curse of death at bay.

For hundreds of years, Jewish families repeated the Passover observance yearly as a constant reminder of the power of God's plan for deliverance. Whether they realized it or not, every time they celebrated the Pass- over, they were, in effect, prophesying of the day

when the Lamb of God would shed His blood for all people.

Spiritually speaking, Jesus' blood can be applied to our hearts to save us from spiritual death and God's wrath. It is no coincidence that the final meal Jesus ate with His disciples, when He taught them the significance of the broken bread and the cup, was in connection with the annual observance of Passover. When Jesus was introduced by John the Baptist at the Jordan River, John called Him *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:7, *"Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."*

The cross still destroys the power of death. Just as the first Passover was a celebration of deliverance, the blood today is a sign of God's love and forgiveness and His power to deliver us from both the penalty and power of sin. Praise God that Jesus is our Passover!

JESUS'S DEATH WAS THE ULTIMATE AND FINAL SACRIFICE

The Scriptures say that Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice *"once for all"* (Hebrews 10:10). This means that, unlike the sacrifices under the law, Jesus' death requires no repetition. It was a sacrifice for the sins of the world for all time. Salvation is complete. It requires nothing else but faith in the atoning merit of the sacrifice and the yielding of one's life to Jesus Christ.

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another;

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. (Hebrews 9:24-28)

Again, the new covenant through Jesus is not temporal but eternal:

Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.... [The Lord said,] *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.* (Hebrews 10:11-14, 17-18)

Seven Blood Offerings

In my vision of the death of Christ, I saw the different ways in which Jesus shed His blood as the ultimate Sacrifice. While reading the book of Leviticus, I came across this intriguing Scripture:

[The high priest] *shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.* (Leviticus 16:14)

Since the Old Testament sacrificial system prefigured New Testament reality, I believe that this rite was an allegory of the seven times Jesus would shed His blood on our behalf during His sufferings.

Sweat like drops of Blood

First, Jesus sweat blood when He prayed to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane about His coming death. He prayed to God the Father, *"If it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, hut Yours, be done"* (Luke 22:42). Perhaps when it came time for Jesus' pure, sinless body to become sin for us, He recoiled at the idea in horror. *"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (v. 44).

STRUCK IN THE FACE

Second, Jesus shed blood when He was struck in the face. *"Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands"* (Matthew 26:67). The prophet Micah had predicted, *"They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek"* (Micah 5:1). Because of the abuse He received, the prophet Isaiah said, *"His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men"* (Isaiah 52:14). In the visions God allowed me to see, there was not an inch of His face that was not covered with blood.

SCOURGING

Third, Jesus shed His precious blood when they lashed His back with an angry whip. *"When* [Pilate] *had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified"* (Matthew 27:26). The prophet Isaiah had predicted concerning the Messiah, *"I gave My back to those who struck Me"* (Isaiah 50:6).

Piercing Thorns

Fourth, Jesus shed blood when the soldiers put the crown of thorns on His head and beat it into His scalp with a club. The large thorns pierced his flesh, and his head wounds must have bled profusely. *"When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head....Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head"* (Matthew 27:29-30).

BEARD PLUCKED OUT

Fifth, adding insult and increasing injury, Jesus' captors plucked out His beard. Isaiah prophesied, *"I gave...My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting"* (Isaiah 50:6).

Crucifixion

Sixth, Jesus shed His blood when He was crucified. His cry of anguish from the Word of God is, *"They pierced My hands and My feet"* (Psalm 22:16). Precious, sinless blood ran down from His hands and feet as He hung on the cross and gave His all for us.

PIERCED WITH A SPEAR

Finally, Jesus shed His precious blood when the soldier rammed a spear into His side to see if He was dead. *"One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out"* (John 19:34). This act may have been the fulfillment of the prophecy, *"They will look on Me whom they pierced"* (Zechariah 12:10).

THE REST OF THE STORY

For all other men who have been crucified, the story ended when their hearts stopped beating. There was nothing left to do but retrieve and bury the bodies. But Jesus Christ was not any other man. He was the Son of God. There had never been another man like this Man nor would there ever be another like Him.

Jesus was God Himself in human flesh. As God, He was present at the creation of the world, and He was a participant in that event.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

Through Jesus, all the stars were put in their ordered places, and the planets were set in their orbit around the sun. He spoke, and the firmament was created, and the waters were parted from the land. Through Him, the grass of the field flourished. He caused the trees to bear fruit. He made the seas teem with life, and He gave the birds their ability to fly.

Jesus was there when the heavenly Father formed Adam from the dust of the ground. He was there when the Father breathed life into Adam, making humanity greater than the beasts of the fields or the birds of the air. He saw the Father cause a great sleep to fall on Adam, then take a single rib from his side and fashion it into a woman.

Jesus also witnessed the tragic entrance of sin into the world, and He willingly came to earth to offer Himself as an atonement for humanity's sins. For this reason He came into the world. For this reason He lived His life. For this reason He offered up His life for us and then was resurrected in glory.

JESUS' BLOOD "SPEAKS"

The Bible says that *"the blood of sprinkling... speaks better things than that of Abel"* (Hebrews 12:24). Remember that, when Cain killed Abel, God told him, *"The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground"* (Genesis 4:10)? Abel's blood rightfully cried out for retribution. Yet Jesus' blood speaks of *"better things"* than retribution.

What are those things? His blood speaks of mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. James, the brother of Christ, who was a witness to the events surrounding Jesus' death on the cross, wrote, *"Mercy triumphs over judgment"* (James 2:13).

When Jesus' blood "speaks"—

- the troubled conscience is at rest
- the broken heart is healed
- the tormenting doubt is silenced
- the trembling fear is quelled

The blood of Christ also speaks for us *"behind the veil"* (Hebrews 6:19) where it has been placed on the heavenly mercy seat. The voice of Jesus' blood of mercy is heard in glory more sweetly and loudly than the voices of all the angels around the throne of God.

His blood pleads louder for you in heaven than all your sins can plead against you on earth.

He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
(Hebrews 7:24-25)

Jesus' Blood Must be Applied

The blood of Jesus is also the *"blood of sprinkling"* (Hebrews 12:24). David Wilkerson explains,

This isn't a physical sprinkling; rather, it is a legal, spiritual transaction. He sprinkles the blood on our hearts in response to our faith. And until we truly believe in the power of His sacrifice at Calvary, the blood of Jesus cannot produce any effect upon our souls![2]

This means that Jesus' blood is applied blood—applied to our hearts and lives, bringing forgiveness, peace, and deliverance. The blood has no practical benefit to us unless it is applied to our consciences, just as the blood of the Passover lamb could not have benefited the Israelite in Egypt if it had not been sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintel of his house. God told His people, *"And when I* ***see the blood,*** *I will pass over you"* (Exodus 12:13, emphasis added).

I hope we have the eyes to see and the wisdom to accept God's great act of redeeming love in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! Today, not only do many people look with revulsion on the shedding of blood that formed such an essential part of the Old Testament sacrificial system, but they also consider with equal distaste the New Testament teaching concerning Christ's blood. They abhor many of the gospel songs and hymns that emphasize the necessity and power of the blood of Christ. They don't like preachers who preach on the effectiveness of the blood.

Those who scorn the shed blood of Christ have their eyes blinded to the Word of God, to the holiness of God, and to the dreadful and radical nature of sin. Sin is a terrible reality, and it calls for a radical cure. Substitutionary death is the only means to life.

The founder of a religious cult that denies the deity of Jesus Christ said that the blood of Christ was no more effective when it was poured out on Calvary than it was in the veins of the living Jesus. But we know that *"without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of Jesus Christ was poured out because only through it could we receive life.

Worthy Is the lamb

In one of my visions of heaven, I heard the angels in heaven shouting about Him, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"* (Revelation 5:12). Heaven was shouting and rejoicing because of the momentous significance of Christ's sacrifice.

Amid these shouts and praises, I heard the singing of the people of God. It was the grandest, most eloquent, most melodious singing I have ever heard. Like the sound *"of many waters"* (Revelation 19:6), it seemed to soar and surge and reverberate across the universe. There was no corner where the beautiful song was not heard. What song did they sing?

You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:9-10)

Likewise, believers through the ages echo, with great joy, the sentiments expressed in the words of this old hymn:

I hear the Savior say,
"Thy strength indeed is small,
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all."

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim—
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.[3]

Praise God for the eternal power of the blood of the lamb!

Hoofstuk 4: Een offer

"'Want deur een offer Het Hy vir altyd volmaak die wat geheilig word."
- Hebreërs 10:14.

Oral waar ek vandag gaan, loop ek mense raak wat 'n gevoel van verlorenheid in hulle ronddra. Dit is nie net dat hulle voel dat hulle lewens geen doel het nie, maar daar is ook 'n leegheid in hulle siele wat hulle geweldig pla. Hierdie gevoel van verlorenheid en alleenheid is iets wat die mens deur die eeue heen reeds ervaar. Met tye voel dit vir die meeste mense asof hulle 'n miljoen myl ver van God af is.

Ongeag van hulle godsdiens en of hulle dit nou wil erken of nie, is daar talle mense wat probeer om deur offers en werke vrede te maak met God. Selfs ongelowiges in vreemde lande streef instinktief daarna om vrede te maak met die een of ander godheid. Watter god mense van oor die wêreld ook al aanbid, hulle aanbidding sluit gewoonlik die een of ander offerrituêel in om hulle gode se guns te wen. Só roep die mens se gewete na 'n manier om sy Skepper te bereik.

Hierdie gevoel van verlorenheid spruit uit die feit dat dit onmoontlik is om op jou eie met God versoen te word. Jy het 'n tussenganger nodig. Kom ons gaan kyk na waarom Jesus se offer die enigste manier is waarop ons met God versoen kan raak.

DIE ONTOEREIKENDHEID VAN DIE OU TESTAMENT

Hoewel die Ou-Testamentiese offerstelsel vir die Israeliete gegee is, is die waarhede wat daarin vervat is, van toepassing op alle mense. Die offers, die priesters, die versoendeksel in die Allerheiligste en die ander aspekte van die tabernakel was maar net die aardse aspekte van die hemelse realiteit wat nog nie gemanifesteer het nie (verwys Hebreërs 8:4-5).

"...maar in die tweede die hoëpriester alleen, een maal in die jaar, nie sonder bloed nie, wat hy offer vir homself en vir die sondes van die volk uit onwetendheid begaan - waarmee die Heilige Gees dít duidelik maak, dat die weg na die heiligdom nog nie geopen is so lank as die eerste tabernakel nog standhou nie. Dit was 'n beeld met die oog op die teenwoordige tyd waarin daar gawes en offers gebring word, wat hom wat die diens verrig, na die gewete nie volkome kan maak nie" (Hebreërs 9:7-9).

Die eerste verbond, wat gegrond was op die mense se gehoorsaamheid aan die wet en die bring van diere-offers, was ondergeskik aan die tweede verbond wat deur Jesus Christus gekom het en op genade en geloof gegrond is.

"Want die wet is deur Moses gegee; die genade en waarheid het deur Jesus Christus gekom" (Johannes 1:17).

Die ou verbond van die wet kon nooit die mens met God versoen en die geweldige besoedeling van die sonde van hom afwas nie. Die doel

daarmee was dan ook om die mense aan hulle sondes te herinner en hulle ook op die gevolge van die sondes te wys.

Die Here sê duidelik en onomwonde wat die gevolge van die sonde is en Hy doen dit onder andere by monde van die profeet Eségiël: *"Die siel wat sondig, dié moet sterwe"* (Eségiël 18:20). God se heiligheid en regverdigheid laat Hom nie toe om die sonde sommer so te vergewe nie. Hy kyk nie maar net uit die hemel op ons af en sê: "Jy het dit goed bedoel" of "Jy het die afgelope week baie goeie dinge gedoen, so Ek sal hierdie sonde maar oorsien" nie.

Ek het eendag 'n visioen van God se reinheid en majesteit gehad. Dit was 'n ongelooflike grootse gesig. Golf ná golf van sy heerlikheid het oor my gespoel en ek kon Sy heiligheid duidelik aanvoel. Ek het daardie dag opnuut besef dat God se heiligheid Hom nie sal toelaat om die sonde oor te sien nie. Die Bybel sê: *"Want die loon van die sonde is die dood"* (Romeine 6:23). My dood of jou dood is egter nie voldoende om die prys vir die sonde te betaal nie. Net so is die bloed van diere nie genoeg nie en is daar niks wat enige mens kan doen om vir die sonde te vergoed en versoening te bewerkstellig nie. Die enigste offer wat voldoende is om vir ons sondes te betaal en ons met God te versoen, is die volmaakte bloed wat Jesus aan die kruis gestort het.

Die offerstelsel is ook bedoel om ons daarop te wys dat ons nodig het om met God versoen te raak en met Hom gemeenskap te hê. As die sondaar nie self vir sy sondes moet sterf nie en as hy met God versoen moet word, dan moet 'n plaasvervanger in sy plek sterf. Dit is die kern van die boodskap van die offerstelsel.

WAAROM IS DIE NUWE VERBOND NOODSAAKLIK?

Een van die groot tekortkominge van die Ou-Testamentiese offerstelsel was die tydelikheid daarvan. 'n Offer het wel vir 'n sonde betaal, maar as die sonde herhaal is, dan moes 'n nuwe offer weer daarvoor gebring word. Daar is waarskynlik geen duideliker Skrifgedeelte oor die noodsaaklikheid van Christus se bloedoffer, as die volgende nie:

[Want as daardie eerste een onberispelik was, sou daar nie plek vir 'n tweede gesoek word nie" (Hebreërs 8:7).

"...want die bloed van stiere en bokke kan onmoontlik die sonde wegneem. Daarom sê Hy, as Hy in die wêreld inkom: Slagoffer en spysoffer wou U nie hê nie, maar U het vir My 'n liggaam berei

... Nadat Hy hierbo gespreek het: Slagoffer en spysoffer en brand- offers en sondoffers wou U nie hê nie en het U nie behaag nie - wat volgens die wet geoffer word - het Hy daarna gesê: Kyk, Ek kom om U wil te doen, o God. Hy neem die eerste weg om die tweede te stel" (Hebreërs 10:4-5; 8-9).

DIE BLOED VAN JESUS HET DIE PRYS BETAAL

Die Ou-Testamentiese hoëpriester en die tabernakel is seremonieël met bloed gereinig. Elke jaar op die Groot Versoendag, het die hoëpriester met 'n skottel bloed in die Allerheiligste ingegaan en dit oor die versoendeksel gesprinkel. Dit was 'n heenwysing na wat Jesus deur Sy dood aan die kruis sou doen.
"Dit was dus nodig dat die afbeeldinge van dinge in die hemele deur hierdie offers gereinig moes word, maar die hemelse dinge self deur beter offers as hierdie. Want Christus het nie ingegaan in 'n heiligdom met hande gemaak, 'n teëbeeld van die ware nie, maar in die hemel self om nou voor die aangesig van God vir ons te verskyn" (Hebreërs 9:23-24).
Jesus se dood aan die kruis was ver verhewe bo die dood van derduisende offerdiere (verwys Miga 6:7). En Sy hoë- priesterlike werk, die feit dat Hy by God vir ons intree, is ver verhewe bo alles wat die priesters van al die eeue saam nog ooit kon gedoen het.
"Maar Christus, wat opgetree het as hoëpriester van die toekomstige weldade, het deur die groter en volmaakte tabernakel wat nie met hande gemaak is nie, dit wil sê, wat nie aan hierdie skepping behoort nie, ook nie met die bloed van bokke en kalwers nie, maar met Sy eie bloed, een maal ingegaan in die heïligdom en 'n ewige verlossing teweeggebring. Want as die bloed van stiere en bokke en die as van 'n vers wat die verontreinigdes besprinkel, heilig maak tot reiniging van die vlees, hoeveel te meer sal die bloed van Christus, wat Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer het, julle gewete reinig van dooie werke om die lewende God te dien. En daarom is Hy Middelaar van 'n nuwe testament, sodat, terwyl daar 'n dood plaasgevind het vir die verlossing van die oortredinge onder die eerste testament, die wat geroepe is, die belofte van die ewige erfenis kan ontvang" (Hebreërs 9:11-15).
'n Mens bekragtig 'n ooreenkoms deur jou handtekening daaronder aan te bring. Dan laat jy gewoonlik ook nog een of meer getuies daarby teken. Daarna moet dit deur 'n notaris bekragtig word. In 'n geestelike sin kan ons sê dat God Sy ooreenkoms met ons in bloed bekragtig het - die bloed van Sy eniggebore Seun, Jesus Christus.

Die bloed van die offer het gedien as versoening vir ons sondes. *"En Hy is 'n versoening vir ons sondes, en nie alleen vir ons s'n nie, maar ook vir dié van die hele wêreld"* (1 Johannes 2:2). "Om te versoen" beteken om gunstig in te stel teenoor. Dit was die doel van die bloedoffer en dit het aan die vereistes van die regverdige God voldoen. Omdat God ons so oneindig liefhet, het Hy gesorg dat die prys vir ons sondes betaal word. Die bloed van Jesus Christus betaal ons skuld ten volle!
"...en hulle word deur sy genade sonder verdienste geregverdig deur die verlossing wat in Christus Jesus is. Hom het God voorgestel in sy bloed as 'n versoening deur die geloof om sy geregtigheid te bewys deurdat Hy die sondes ongestraf laat bly het wat tevore gedoen is onder die

verdraagsaamheid van God - om Sy geregtigheid te toon in die teenwoordige tyd, sodat Hy self regverdig kan wees en regverdig maak wie uit die geloof in Jesus is" (Romeine 3:24-26).
Kom ons gaan kyk nou van naderby hoe Jesus die prys betaal het wat niemand anders kon betaal nie en hoe Hy versoening vir ons sondes bewerkstellig het, sodat ons die ewige lewe kan hê.

DIE HISTORIESE GOLGOTA

Duisende toeriste besoek Jerusalem elke jaar en stap deur die strate waar Jesus lank gelede geloop het. Toergidse neem besoekers gewoonlik na die tuingraf, van waar, so glo baie, Hy uit die dood uit opgestaan het. Ná 'n toer deur 'n olyfboord, word jy na 'n punt gelei van waar jy oor die strate van die ou Jerusalem kan uitkyk.

Jou aandag word dadelik getrek deur 'n koppie en 'n steilte links van die uitkykpunt. Die koppie het 'n paar in- hamme en jy kan duidelik sien dat dit soos 'n kopbeen lyk. Daar, sê die toergids vir jou, is die plek wat bekend staan as Golgota.

In Jesus se tyd het die blote noem van die naam Golgota die mense bang gemaak - veral as dit iemand was wat aan die verkeerde kant van die wet geleef het - want Golgota was die plek waar misdadigers tereggestel is. Tweeduisend jaar gelede het daardie koppie 'n belangrike rol in die Romeinse regstelsel gespeel. Dit was een van baie plekke waar die Romeine die doodstraf voltrek het en wel in die vorm van kruisigings, een van die pynlikste maniere waarop 'n mens kan sterf. Dit neem ure - selfs dae - vir die persoon om te sterf en al daardie tyd hang hy daar tussen hemel en aarde, met spykers wat deur sy hande en voete geslaan is.

Op daardie kleinerige koppie is daar 'n begraafplaas met verskeie monumente wat opgerig is ter nagedagtenis aan die mense wat daar begrawe is. Vir die Jode van vandag, is Golgota maar net 'n plek waar dooies begrawe word. Die Moslems noem dit die plek waar die minder belangrike profeet Jesus deur die toedoen van die heidene gely het.

Vir sommige ateïste is Golgota 'n plek om oor grappe te maak, 'n plek om mee te spot. En vir ander is dit bloot die plek waar die historiese figuur met die naam Jesus gesterf het. Hoewel hulle waarskynlik sal erken dat dit 'n tragiese gebeurtenis was, heg hulle geen geestelike betekenis daaraan nie. Hulle redeneer só: "Hy kon nie die Seun van
God gewees het nie, want God kan nie sterf nie. As Jesus se liggaam nie gevind is nie, beteken dit dat Hy nie gesterf het nie, maar net erg beseer is en dat Hy later Sy bewussyn herwin het, of dat Sy dissipels Sy liggaam gesteel en weggesteek het en later verkondig het dat Hy opgestaan het."

Maar in ons hemelse Vader se groot plan was Golgota die plek

waar 'n ingrypende versoening tussen God en mens plaasgevind het. Hy het besluit dat daardie koppie die plek sou wees waar die hoogste offer gebring sou word. In Sy goddelike en onbegryplike wysheid, het Hy dit die plek gemaak waar die Seun van God Sy bloed sou stort vir die algehele reiniging van ons sondes.

Vir dié wat vergewe en as kinders van God aangeneem is, is Golgota heilige grond. Dit was daar dat die Seun van God hulle verlossing tot in alle ewigheid bewerkstellig het. Dit staan vir ewig as 'n herinnering aan Sy lyding en die volkome en volmaakte offer wat Hy ter wille van hulle gebring het.

JESUS SE LYDING

LYDING IN SY SIEL

Ek verwys in hoofstuk een na die visioen van die kruisiging wat aan my geopenbaar is. God het my ook toegelaat om Jesus in die Tuin van Getsémane te sien waar Hy die aand voor Sy dood gebid het. Die Skrif sê: *"En toe Hy in 'n sware stryd kom, het Hy met groter inspanning gebid, en Sy sweet het geword soos bloeddruppets wat op die grond val"* (Lukas 22:44). Ek het gehoor hoe Jesus vir sy dissipels sê: *"My siel is diep bedroef tot die dood toe"* (Matthéus 26:38).

Ek kon sien en aanvoel dat Sy taak uiters swaar op Sy skouers gerus het. En ek glo dat Hy slegs in staat was om dié las te dra omdat Hy die Seun van God was. Hoe wonderlik het Hy nie die las gedra nie! Maar as die Seun van die mens, was Sy liggaam swak, en die stremming het sy tol begin eis. Dit was egter maar nog net die begin, want nie alleen sou hulle Hom doodmaak nie, maar Hy sou ook nog op talle ander maniere moes ly voordat Hy uiteindelik gekruisig sou word.

VERRAAD

Ek het in die visioen baie van die sleutelfigure wat by die kruisiging betrokke was, gesien. Judas was die ergste van almal wat ek gesien het, want hy was as dissipel vir drie- en-'n-half jaar intiem by Jesus betrokke, net om Hom daar- na as gevolg van sy geldgierigheid te verraai. Vir dertig silwerstukke het hy Jesus oorgegee in die hande van dié wat Hom wou doodmaak. Ons lees in die Bybel dat die Satan van Judas Iskáriot se hart besit geneem het (Lukas 22:3).

Die manier waarop Judas Jesus verraai het was afskuwelik. Hy het die priesterhoofde, die leiers van die volk en die tempelwag saam met 'n groot skare mense na die plek gelei waar Jesus besig was om te bid. Toe hy naby aan Hom kom, het hy Hom gesoen. Jesus het hom gevra: *"Judas, verraai jy die Seun van die mens met 'n kus?"* (Lukas 22:48). God se Seun moes die verraad verduur van een van dié wat die naaste aan Hom was.

Ek het ook verwys na die priesterhoofde en die skrif- geleerdes. Die Bybel sê vir ons dat hulle, net voordat Jesus gekruisig is, *"gesoek (het) hoe hulle Hom kon ombring"* (Lukas 22:2). Ja, daardie geestelike manne na wie die volk so opgesien het, was die eerstes wat Jesus se kruisiging voorgestaan het. Hulle was die eerstes van die honderde wat uit- eindelik as 'n bloeddorstige skare op Sy kruisiging sou aandring.

GESLAAN EN BESPOT

Ek het nog 'n deel van Jesus se lyding gesien: hoe verskriklik Hy geslaan is. Ek het gesien hoedat die geestelike leiers Hom na die huis van die hoëpriester neem en Hom begin ondervra. Hulle het Hom geblinddoek en Hom met die
vuis geslaan en vir Hom gesê: *"Profeteer wie dit is wat U geslaan het*" (Lukas 22:64). Só het hulle dwarsdeur die nag aangehou om Hom te slaan.

Toe die dag breek het die geestelike leiers byeengekom en Jesus valslik daarvan beskuldig dat Hy God gelaster het. Daarna het hulle Hom na Pilatus, die Romeinse goewerneur, geneem.

Toe Pilatus hoor dat Jesus 'n Galileër was, het hy Hom na Herodes toe gestuur, omdat Galilea onder Herodes se gesag geval het. Herodes het eers die spot met Hom gedryf, toe vir Hom 'n koninklike kleed aangetrek en Hom na Pilatus toe teruggestuur. Ons lees in die Skrif dat Pilatus en Herodes, wat vantevore vyande was, op daardie dag vriende geword het (Lukas 23:12). Die diaboliese band wat hulle gebind het, is die lyding wat die Here Jesus onder hulle albei moes verduur.

VALSLIK TER DOOD VEROORDEEL

Pilatus het Jesus uiteindelik voor die godsdiensleiers en die volk uitgebring. Hy was oortuig daarvan dat Jesus onskuldig was en wou Hom vrylaat. Maar dit was duidelik dat hy in 'n geweldige tweestryd was: moes hy die regte ding doen en Hom vrylaat - of moes hy die mense hulle sin gee?

Ek het gesien hoe Pilatus sy hand oplig en hoe die skare stil raak. Hy het hulle hard en duidelik gevra wat hy met Jesus moes doen. Die priesterhoofde het die skare opgesweep. Opgesweep en opgewonde het hulle hard geskree: *“Kruisig Hom!"* (verwys byvoorbeeld Markus 15:13).

In 'n hopelose poging om homself te verontskuldig, het Pilatus sy hande gewas en gesê: *"Neem julle Hom en kruisig Hom, want ek vind geen skuld in Hom nie"* (Johannes 19:6).

Daarop het Pilatus Hom ter dood veroordeel en Hom. weer laat slaan voordat Hy gekruisig sou word. Ek het gesien hoedat die Romeinse soldaat die sweep oplig en Jesus hard daarmee oor sy rug

slaan.

WREED GEGÉSEL

Romeinse géseling was 'n verskriklike vorm van straf. Die gevangene is aan 'n paal vasgebind, met sy arms bokant sy kop. Die Romeinse soldate wat die slaanwerk gedoen het, was ook goed onderlê in hulle taak. Hulle het presies geweet hoe om te werk te gaan om die maksimum pyn te ontlok.

Die sweep wat hulle gebruik het, was soortgelyk aan 'n kats, maar in plaas van knope was daar stukkies metaal of been in die leer vasgemaak. Elke hou het die vel dus onmiddellik gekloof en verskriklike pyn tot gevolg gehad. Teen die tyd dat die slae uiteindelik opgehou het, was die vel heeltemal stukkend en het die gevangene reeds baie bloed verloor.

BESPOT EN VERNEDER

Pilatus het Jesus uiteindelik oorgelewer om gekruisig te word. Die hele garnisoen Romeinse soldate het om Hom saamgedrom en Hom bespot omdat Hy gesê het dat Hy die Koning van die Jode was. Hulle het sy klere uitgetrek, vir Hom 'n pers mantel omgehang en 'n riet in Sy hande gestop. Toe sien ek hoedat hulle 'n lang doringtak neem en 'n ruwe doringkroon daaruit vleg. Hulle het spottend voor Hom gekniel, in Sy gesig gespoeg en op Hom geskree.

Ek het met afgryse toegekyk terwyl hulle daardie ver- skriklike doringkroon op Sy kop druk. Toe gryp een van hulle die stok in Sy hande en begin Hom hard daarmee oor die kop slaan! Dít is hoe die Bybel dié grusame toneel beskryf: *"...en hulle vleg 'n kroon van dorings en sit dit op Sy hoof, en ’n riet in Sy regterhand; en hulle val op hul knieë voor Hom en bespot Hom en sê: Wees gegroet, Koning van die Jode! En hulle spuug op Hom en neem die riet en slaan Hom op Sy hoof. En nadat hulle Hom bespot het, trek hulle Hom die mantel uit en trek Hom Sy klere aan en lei Hom weg om gekruisig te word"* (Matthéús 27:29-31).

Sowel Pilatus as Herodes het die geleentheid gehad om Jesus vry te laat omdat hulle albei besef het dat Hy niks gedoen het wat die doodstraf verdien het nie. Maar hulle is albei deur die mense se wil beïnvloed en het dit nié gedoen nie. Die Romeinse soldate het Jesus gegésel terwyl die godsdiensleiers geskree het: "Kruisig Hom!" 'n Romeinse leier het Hom ter dood veroordeel terwyl die skare uitgeroep het: "Kruisig Hom!" (verwys verse 20, 22-23).

Dít is hoe Jesus gely het nog voordat Hy na die kruis toe is. Dit is vir my verskriklik om te dink aan die groep mense wat betrokke was by die gebeure wat tot Sy dood gelei het.

Die priesterhoofde, die skrifgeleerdes, die fariseërs en die Joodse Raad het almal saamgespan om die Romeinse heersers sover te kry om Jesus ter dood te veroordeel en seker te maak dat die teregstelling wel

plaasvind. Saam het hulle die skares gewone mense in die strate van Jerusalem opgesweep sodat hulle op Jesus se dood aangedring het.

Jood en nie-Jood, meester en dienskneg, heerser en gewone mens - almal het saamgespan en op die bloed van Jesus aangedring. Daar word soms gedebatteer oor wie werklik vir Jesus se kruisiging verantwoordelik was. Dit sou egter moeilik wees om 'n individu of groep uit te sonder wat in 'n groter mate as die ander daarvoor verantwoordelik was. 'n Mens sou die skuld op Judas kon pak, of op Pilatus, of die Joodse raad, of dit voor die Romeine se deur kon lê, of die skare Jode verantwoordelik kon hou - maar die waarheid is dat hulle almal saam vir Sy dood verantwoordelik was - net soos ons vandag ook daarvoor verantwoordelik is.

Die Skrif bevestig hierdie waarheid, want dit was om vir óns sondes te betaal dat Jesus na die kruis toe gegaan het:
"...soos geskrywe is: Daar is niemand regverdig nie, selfs nie een nie. Daar is niemand wat verstandig is nie, daar is niemand wat God soek nie. Hulle het almal afgewyk, saam het hulle ontaard. Daar is niemand wat goed doen nie, daar is selfs nie een nie" (Romeine 3:10-12).
Daar is nie een individu of groep wat in 'n groter mate as die ander vir Christus se dood verantwoordelik was nie. Net soos wat almal aan die sonde skuldig is, so is almal skuldig aan die feit dat Sy bloed op Golgota gestort is.

Die visioene wat die Here my van die kruisiging gegee het, is so skerp en werklik vir altyd in my hart en gemoed afgeëts. Die vinger van God het dit self daar afgeëts. Twee- duisend jaar het verloop sedert daardie verskriklike dag. Ons leef reeds twee millenia ná daardie dag. Maar in my hart weet ek dat ek en jy net so skuldig is aan Jesus se dood as wat daardie mense was wat Hom gekruisig het.

GEKRUISIG

Baie mense weet wel dat Jesus aan die kruis gehang het. Hulle weet dat Hy só gesterf het, maar hulle het nie die vaagste benul van die verskrikking van 'n kruisdood nie.

In die visioen het ek gesien hoe vier mans Jesus se lede- mate vashou terwyl 'n vyfde die penne deur Sy liggaam tot binne-in die kruis slaan. Sy ledemate was nie heeltemal gestrek nie en Hy het 'n klein bietjie beweegruimte gehad. Maar ek het later uitgevind dat dit nie uit jammerte toegelaat is nie, maar juis om sy lyding te vererger.

As 'n mens aan 'n kruis hang, rus jou volle gewig op die spykers wat deur jou hande en voete geslaan is. Omdat jou gewig jou na onder trek, is die pyn in jou hande dus des te erger. Die gevolg is dat jy jouself na boontoe probeer opstoot om die pyn in jou hande te verlig. Dit vererger egter weer die ontsettende pyn van die spykers deur jou voete. En as dít te erg raak, dan hang jy maar weer aan jou hande. En

só gaan dit uur na uur - en soms dag na dag - terwyl die pyn net al hoe meer intens raak.

Elke beweging wat Jesus sou maak, sou ook Sy stukkende rug teen die ruwe splinterhout van die kruis laat skuur. Daar was geen uitkoms êrens nie - net pyn op alle vlakke.

Sy bors- en maagspiere - dié deel van sy liggaam wat sy asemhaling beheer - sou later heeltemal verlam raak terwyl Hy in daardie posisie sou hang. Daarom sou die terdood- veroordeelde later geen keuse hê as om hom maar weer teen die spykers in sy voete na boontoe op te stoot net om weer asem te skep nie.

Uiteindelik sou so iemand aan 'n kruis versmoor. Hy sou swakker en swakker raak soos die tyd verbygaan, totdat die finale verskrikking te veel sou raak. Hy sou later só swak en uitgeput raak, dat hy nie meer die krag sou hê om homself op te stoot en die pyn in sy hande te verlig nie - en dan sou hy ook nie meer asem kry nie.

Asof hierdie grusame realiteit nie genoeg was nie, moes Jesus ook nog aan die kruis verdere spot verduur:
"En hulle (die soldate) het sy klere verdeel en die lot daaroor gewerp. En die volk het dit staan en aanskou. En die owerstes het saam met hulle ook geskimp en gesê: Ander het Hy verlos; laat Hy Homself verlos as Hy die Christus, die uitverkorene van God is. En die soldate het Hom ook bespot en gekom en vir Hom asyn gebring en gesê: As U die Koning van die Jode is, verlos Uself. En daar was ook 'n opskrif bokant Hom geskrywe in Griekse en Homeinse en Hebreeuse letters: HY IS DIE KONING VAN DIE JODE. En een van die kwaaddoeners wat opgehang is, het Hom gesmaad en gesê: As U die Christus is, verlos Uself en ons" (Lukas 23:34-39).
Ja, 'n kruisdood kon dae neem. As die Romeine die proses egter wou verhaas, het hulle soms die gekruisigde se bene gebreek sodat hy homself nie meer kon opstoot en só makliker kon asemhaal nie. Jesus is saam met twee misdadigers gekruisig en die godsdiensleiers wou nie hê dat hulle liggame nog die volgende dag, wat 'n spesiale sabbat sou wees, aan die kruise moes hang nie. Daarom het hulle by Pilatus toestemming gekry om die gekruisigdes se bene te breek. Hy het ingestem, maar toe die soldate by Jesus kom, het hulle gesien dat Hy alreeds dood was en daarom het hulle nie Sy bene gebreek nie (verwys Johannes 19:31-33).

Om egter seker te maak dat Jesus regtig dood was, het 'n Romeinse soldaat 'n spies in Sy sy gesteek en daar het bloed en water uit die wond gevloei. Die Bybel sê vir ons:
"Want hierdie dinge het gebeur, dat die Skrif vervul sou word: Geen been van Hom sal gebreek word nie. En weer sê 'n ander Skrif: Hulle sal sien in wie hulle gesteek het" (Johannes 19:36- 37).
Die verskrikking van die kruisiging was sekerlik nog erger as die ontsettende lyding wat ek in my visioene gesien het. Ons moet altyd

onthou dat Jesus daardie lyding verduur het sodat ons vergifnis kan ontvang, met God versoen kan word en 'n oorvloedige en ewige lewe kan hê.

DIE LAS VAN DIE SONDE OP SY SKOUERS

Jesus het Sy liggaam, verstand en gees aan die lyding van die kruis oorgegee. Baie mense dink net aan die fisieke lyding wat Hy moes verduur. Hy het ontsettende fisieke pyn verduur, maar dit was waarskynlik nie so erg soos die ander lyding wat Hy moes dra nie.

Waar Hy aan die kruis gehang het, het Hy die las gedra van die sonde van elke mens wat nog ooit geleef het. Ons moet onthou dat Jesus Christus volmaak sondeloos was en dat ál ons sonde en boosheid in daardie ure op Hom neergekom het. Dit sou erger wees as wat enige normale mens kon verduur. En omdat God heilig is en die sonde vir Hom in alle opsigte onaanvaarbaar is, het Hy vir die heel eerste keer toe Jesus aan die kruis was, van Hom af weggedraai. Daarom het Hy in daardie ure ook die ontsettende eensaamheid van vervreemding van God ervaar, net soos die res van die mensdom. Jesus was heeltemal alleen!

JESUS HET AAN AL DIE VEREISTES VIR 'n SOENOFFER VOLDOEN

'n OFFER VAN ONSKATBARE WAARDE

Ons het in die vorige hoofstuk gesien dat 'n persoon onder die ou offerstelsel 'n dier of produk van waarde wat aan hom behoort het, moes bring om geoffer te word. Jesus het dít wat vir Hom die heel kosbaarste was, vir ons geoffer - Sy lewe.

"Daarom het die Vader My lief, omdat Ek my lewe aflê om dit weer te neem. Niemand neem dit van My af nie, maar Ek lê dit uit Myself af. Ek het mag om dit af te lê en Ek het mag om dit weer te neem. Hierdie gebod het Ek van My Vader ontvang" (Johannes 10:17-18).

Christus was nie net, soos sommige mense glo, die slagoffer van kwaadwillige en jaloerse mense nie. Hy het bewustelik en gewilliglik Sy lewe vir ons afgelê. Die kruis is die middelpunt van God se ewige verlossingplan. Ons hemelse Vader het Golgota nie net voorsien nie, maar dit ook beplan. Bose mense sou onder geen omstandighede die Seun van God aan die kruis vasgespyker het sonder die Vader se toestemming en sonder dat die Seun daartoe gewillig was nie.

'n OFFER SONDER GEBREK

Onthou dat die offers onder die ou offerstelsel sonder gebrek moes wees. Jesus, ons hoogste Offer en Plaasvervanger, moes ook volmaak en sonder gebrek wees. Hy was dan ook volkome sondeloos toe Hy Hom in ons plek aan die Vader geoffer het. Daar is baie Skrifgedeeltes

wat getuig dat Hy rein en heilig voor God en die wêreld was, soos onder meer die volgende: *"(Jesus het gesê:) Wie van julle oortuig My van sonde? En as Ek die waarheid spreek, waarom glo julle My nie?" (Johannes 8:46).*

"Hy (Jesus) wat geen sonde gedoen het nie, en in wie se mond geen bedrog gevind is nie" (1 Petrus 2:22).

"En julle weet dat Hy verskyn het om ons sondes weg te neem, en geen sonde is in Hom nie" (1 Johannes 3:5).

Jesus se bloed is volmaak. Dit is die bloed van God se eniggebore Seun, die God-mens, Christus Jesus.

"Christus Jesus ... wat in die gestalte van God was, het dit geen roof geag om aan God gelyk te wees nie, maar het Homself ontledig deur die gestalte van 'n dienskneg aan te neem en aan die mense gelyk geword; en in gedaante gevind as 'n mens, het Hy Homself verneder deur gehoorsaam te word tot die dood toe, ja, die dood van die kruis" (Filippense 2:5-8).

Christus se bloed verteenwoordig die volmaakte en volkome offer van Homself wat Hy vir die sondes van die wêreld gebring het. Alles omtrent Sy lewe was rein - daar was nie 'n enkele beduidenis van die sonde êrens in Sy lewe nie. Sy gehoorsaamheid aan God was volmaak. Hy was die enigste aanvaarbare Offer wat vir die sondes van die mense kon betaal.

"...omdat julle weet dat julle nie deur verganklike dinge, silwer of goud, losgekoop is (nie) ... maar deur die kosbare bloed van Christus, soos van 'n lam sonder gebrek en vlekkeloos, wat wel vooruit geken is voor die grondlegging van die wêreld, maar in hierdie laaste tye geopenbaar is om julle ontwil" (1 Petrus 1:18- 20).

’n OFFER BUITE DIE STAD GEBRING

Jesus het ook voldoen aan die vereistes vir die soenoffer deurdat Hy buite die stad Jerusalem gekruisig is. Soos die Skrif sê:

"...want die diere waarvan die bloed vir die sonde deur die hoë- priester in die heiligdom ingedra word - hulle word buitekant die laer verbrand. Daarom het Jesus ook, om die volk deur sy eie bloed te heilig, buitekant die poort gely" (Hebreërs 13:11-12).

Die grootste bloedoffer in die geskiedenis van die wêreld is tweeduisend jaar gelede aan die kruis van Golgota gebring. Slegs die bloed van Jesus kan die ewige lewe gee! Die bloed wat daardie dag gestort is, was voldoende vir die verlos- sing van elke sondaar wat nog ooit gebore is - en sal steeds voldoende bly tot aan die einde van die tyd.

‘n PLAASVERVANGENDE OFFER

Nog 'n manier waarop Jesus aan die vereistes vir die soen- offer voldoen het, was deur die feit dat Sy dood plaasvervangend was. Daardeur het Hy aan God se vereiste vir geregtigheid voldoen. Sy

bloed het aan daardie vereiste vol- doen en die sonde effektief uitgewis.

As ons sê dat Jesus se dood plaasvervangend was, dan beteken dit dat Hy in die plek van sondaars gesterf het. Die woord plaasvervangend kom nie in die Bybel voor nie, net soos wat die woord evangelisasie ook nie in die Bybel voorkom nie. Maar die konsep is een wat dwarsdeur die Skrif voorkom.

Toe Jesus die prys vir die sonde betaal het, het Hy die plek van skuldige mense ingeneem. Só het God die Vader *"Hom wat geen sonde geken het nie, sonde vir ons gemaak, sodat ons kan word geregtigheid van God in Hom"* (2 Korinthiërs 5:21).

Weer eens moet ek beklemtoon dat die dood van die Here Jesus Christus nie die straf van 'n misdadiger of die dood van 'n martelaar was nie, maar dat dit 'n plaasvervangende dood was. *"Want Christus het ook een maal vir die sondes gely, Hy die Regverdige, vir die onregverdiges, om ons tot God te bring - Hy wat wel gedood is na die vlees, maar lewend gemaak deur die Gees"* (1 Petrus 3:18).

Jesus het geen sondes gehad nie. Hy het vir ons gesterf, in ons plek gesterf, namens ons gesterf. Hy het vir ons almal gesterf en die straf wat ons verdien het, op Hom geneem.

In Hebreërs 9:5 is die Griekse woord wat met versoen- deksel vertaal is en dus verwys na die plek waar God in die tabernakel teenwoordig was, dieselfde as die woord wat vir versoening gebruik is. Dit is dus heeltemal in orde om dit só te gebruik, want die wet het 'n offer vir die sonde vereis en as die bloed op die versoendeksel geplaas is, was dit die bewys dat die offer gebring is en dat die prys betaal is.

Die offer van Jesus se bloed is voldoende om ons van ons sonde te reinig en aan ons 'n nuwe lewe te gee. Ons lees in Hebreërs:
"Deur hierdie wil is ons geheilig deur die offer van die liggaam van Jesus Christus, net een maal ... Want deur een offer het Hy vir altyd volmaak die wat geheilig word" (Hebreërs 10:10,14).
Een van die groot lesse van die Skrif wat die effektiwiteit van die plaasvervangende bloed van Jesus openbaar, is die verhaal van die Paasfees. Egipte se weiering om aan God gehoorsaam te wees, het daartoe gelei dat Hy die lewe van elke eersgeborene in Egipte geneem het. God se plan om te verhinder dat die eersgeborenes van die Israeliete ook sterf, is die Paasfees genoem.

Elke Hebreeuse gesin moes 'n lam slag en sy bloed aan die deurkosyn bokant en langs die deur smeer. Selfs soveel eeue voor die Nuwe Testament was die teken van die kruis al toepaslik en het dit die vloek van die dood van die volk van God af weggehou.

Honderde jare lank het Joodse families die Paasfees elke jaar gevier en God se kragtige verlossingsplan daardeur herdenk. Of hulle

dit nou besef het of nie, het hulle elke keer met die herdenking daarvan ook heengewys na die dag wanneer die Lam van God Sy bloed vir alle mense sou stort.

Geestelik gesproke kan Jesus se bloed op ons harte toegepas word en ons van geestelike dood en die toorn van God red. Dit is nie toevallig dat die laaste maaltyd wat Jesus saam met sy dissipels geëet het, toe Hy vir hulle die betekenis van die brood en die beker uitgewys het, ook die jaarlikse herdenking van die Paasfees was nie. Toe Johannes die Doper Jesus by die Jordaanrivier aan die mense voorgestel het, het hy gesê: *"Dáár is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem!"* (Johannes 1:29). Die apostel Paulus skryf in 1 Korinthiërs 5:7: *"...want ook ons paaslam is vir ons geslag, naamlik Christus."*

Die kruis vernietig steeds die krag van die dood. Net soos die eerste Paasfees 'n viering van verlossing was, so is die bloed vandag 'n teken van God se liefde en vergifnis en ook van Sy krag om ons van die straf en die krag van die sonde te verlos. Loof God dat Jesus ons Paasfees is!

JESUS SE DOOD WAS DIE FINALE OFFER

Die Skrif sê dat Jesus Christus Homself "net een maal" as 'n offer vir ons gegee het (Hebreërs 10:10). Dit beteken dat Sy dood, anders as die offers onder die wet, nie herhaal hoef te word nie. Dit was 'n offer vir die sondes van die wêreld - 'n offer wat vir alle tye geld. Die verlossing wat daardeur bewerkstellig is, is finaal en volmaak. Daar word niks meer as geloof in die soenverdienste van die offer vereis nie - dít en ook dat die gelowige sy lewe vir Jesus Christus sal gee.

"Want Christus het nie ingegaan in 'n heiligdom met hande gemaak, 'n teëbeeld van die ware nie, maar in die hemel self om nou voor die aangesig van God vir ons te verskyn; ook nie om Homself dikwels te offer, soos die hoëpriester elke jaar in die heiligdom ingaan met bloed wat nie sy eie is nie, want dan moes Hy dikwels gely het van die grondlegging van die wêreld af. Maar nou het Hy een maal in die voleinding van die eeue verskyn om die sonde deur Sy offer weg te doen. En net soos die mense bestem is om eenmaal te sterwe en daarna die oordeel, so sal Christus ook, nadat Hy een maal geoffer is om die sondes van baie weg te neem, vir die tweede maal sonder sonde verskyn aan die wat Hom verwag tot saligheid" (Hebreërs 9:24-28).

Ons weet ook dat die nuwe verbond deur Jesus nie tydelik is nie, maar ewig: *"En elke priester staan wel dag vir dag om die diens waar te neem en dikwels dieselfde slagoffers te bring wat tog nooit die sondes kan wegneem nie; maar Hy het, nadat Hy een slagoffer vir die sondes gebring het, vir altyd gaan sit aan die regterhand van God en weg nou verder totdat Sy vyande gemaak is 'n voetbank van Sy voete. Want deur een offer het Hy vir*

altyd volmaak die wat geheilig word ... (Die Here het gesê:) en aan hulle sondes en hulle ongeregtighede sal Ek nooit meer dink nie. Waar daar nou vergifnis van hierdie dinge is, is daar geen offer meer vir die sonde nie" (Hebreërs 10:11-14; 17-18).

SEWE BLOEDOFFERS

In my visioen van Christus se dood, het ek die verskillende maniere waarop Hy sy bloed as die finale offer gestort het, gesien. Terwyl ek die boek Levítikus gelees het, het ek op dié interessante gedeelte afgekom:

"En hy moet van die bloed van die bul neem en dit met sy vinger op die versoendeksel aan die oostekant sprinkel; en voor die versoendeksel moet hy sewe maal met sy vinger van die bloed sprinkel" (Levítikus 16:14).

Aangesien die Ou-Testamentiese offerstelsel 'n heenwysing is na die Nuwe-Testamentiese realiteit, glo ek dat dié ritueel tekenend was van die sewe keer dat Jesus Sy bloed tydens Sy lyding vir ons sou stort.

SWEET SOOS BLOEDDRUPPELS

Jesus het eerstens bloed gesweet terwyl Hy in die Tuin van Getsémane tot die Vader gebid het. Hy het vir die Vader gevra: *"Vader, as U tog maar hierdie beker van My wil weg- neem! Laat nogtans nie My wil nie, maar U wil geskied!" (Lukas 22:42). Dit is baie moontlik dat Jesus in daardie oomblikke, toe dit tyd geword het vir Sy rein en sondelose liggaam om vir óns sonde te word, in afgryse teruggedeins het. "En toe Hy in 'n sware stryd kom, het Hy met groter in- spanning gebid, en Sy sweet het geword soos bloeddruppels wat op die grond val" (vers 44).*

IN DIE GESIG GESLAAN

Jesus het in die tweede plek bloed gestort toe Hy in die gesig geslaan is. *"Toe het hulle in Sy aangesig gespuug en Hom met die vuis geslaan"* (Matthéus 26:67). Die profeet Jesaja het eeue voor Jesus se geboorte reeds van die lyding wat Hy sou verduur, gesê: "... *so misvormd was Sy voorkoms, geen mens meer nie, en Sy gestalte was nie soos dié van 'n mensekind nie"* (Jesaja 52:14). In die visioene wat God my toegelaat het om te sien, was daar nie 'n duim van Sy gesig wat nie vol bloed was nie.

GÉSELING

In die derde plek het Jesus Sy kosbare bloed gestort toe hulle Sy rug met die wrede kats geslaan het. *"...maar Jesus het hy (Pilatus) laat gésel en oorgelewer om gekruisig te word"* (Matthéus 27:26). Die profeet Jesaja het ook dáároor geprofeteer: *"Ek het My rug gegee vir die wat slaan"* (Jesaja 50:6).

DORINGS WAT STEEK

In die vierde plek het Jesus Sy bloed gestort toe die soldate 'n doringkroon op Sy kop gedruk en dit nog dieper ingedryf het deur Hom met 'n stok oor die kop te slaan. Die groot dorings het diep in die kop gesteek en daardie wonde het sekerlik baie gebloei. *"...en hulle vleg 'n kroon van dorings en sit dit op Sy hoof... en hulle spuug op Hom en neem die riet en slaan Hom op Sy hoof* (Matthéús 27:29-30).

SY BAARDIS UITGEPLUK

Vyfdens het die soldate Jesys se lyding vererger deur sy baard uit te pluk. Ons lees in Jesaja 50:6: *"Ek het... my wange (gegee) vir die wat die hare uitpluk; my aangesig het Ek nie ver- berg vir smaadhede en bespuwing nie."*

KRUISIGING

In die sesde plek het Jesus sy bloed gestort toe Hy gekruisig is. Sy uitroep van pyn klink op uit die Skrif: *"...hulle het my hande en my voete deurgrawe"* (Psalm 22:17). Kosbare, sondelose bloed het uit Sy hande en voete gevloei waar Hy aan die kruis gehang en Sy alles vir ons gegee het.

MET 'n SPIES DEURBOOR

In die laaste plek het Jesus Sy bloed gestort toe 'n soldaat Hom met 'n spies in Sy sy gesteek het om te sien of Hy dood was. *"Maar een van die soldate het met 'n spies in Sy sy gesteek, en dadelik het daar bloed en water uitgekom"* (Johannes 19:34). Hierdie daad kon wel die vervulling van die profesie in Sagaría 12:10 gewees het: *"...en hulle sal opsien na My vir wie hulle deurboor het."*

DIE RES VAN DIE VERHAAL

Al die ander mense wat nog ooit gekruisig is, se verhaal het tot 'n einde gekom die oomblik toe hulle harte ophou klop het. Al wat oorgebly het, was om die liggame af te haal en te begrawe. Maar Jesus Christus was nie "enigiemand anders" nie. Hy was die Seun van God. Daar wás nog nooit 'n mens soos Hy nie en daar sál ook nooit een soos Hy wees nie.

Jesus was God self in 'n menslike gestalte. As God was Hy daar toe die wêreld tot stand gebring is, en het Hy deel gehad aan daardie gebeurtenis.

In die begin was die Woord, en die Woord was by God, en die Woord was God. Hy was in die begin by God. Alle dinge het deur Hom ontstaan, en sonder Hom het nie een ding ontstaan wat ontstaan het nie" (Johannes 1:1-3).

Jesus het die sterre op hulle plekke in die ruimte gesit en die planete in hulle wentelbane om die son geplaas. Hy het gepraat, die uitspansel is geskep en die waters is van die land geskei. Deur Hom het die gras

van die veld gefloreer. Danksy Hom het die bome vrugte gedra, is daar oorvloedig lewe in die see en kan die voëls van die hemel vlieg.

Jesus was daar toe die hemelse Vader Adam uit die stof van die aarde gevorm het. Hy was daar toe die Vader lewe in Adam geblaas het en só die mens groter as die diere van die veld of die voëls van die hemel gemaak het. Hy het gesien hoe die Vader Adam diep laat slaap het sodat Hy 'n ribbebeen van hom kon neem en daaruit vir hom 'n maat, 'n vrou kon maak.

Jesus het ook gesien hoe die sonde in die wêreld kom en Hy het uit vrye wil na die wêreld toe gekom om Homself as soenoffer vir die mensdom se sonde te gee. Dit is waarom Hy na die wêreld toe gekom het. Dit is waarom Hy hier kom lewe het. Dit is waarom Hy Sy lewe opgeoffer vir ons het en toe in heerlikheid uit die dood opgewek is.

DIE BLOED VAN JESUS "PRAAT"

Die Bybel sê dat die *"bloed van die besprenkeling ... van beter dinge spreek as Abel"* (Hebreërs 12:24). Onthou dat die Here na die moord op Abel vir Kain gesê het: *"Die stem van die bloed van jou broer roep na My van die aarde af"* (Génesis 4:10). Abel se bloed het heeltemal tereg om vergelding geroep. Maar die bloed van Jesus praat van "beter dinge" as vergelding.

Wat is daardie dinge? Sy bloed praat van genade, vergifnis en versoening. Jakobus, die broer van Christus, wat die gebeure aan die kruis gesien het, skryf: *"...die barmhartigheid roem teen die oordeel"* (Jakobus 2:13).

As die bloed van Jesus "praat",

- kom die onrustige gewete tot rus;
- word die gebroke hart genees;
- word die twyfel stil;
- word die vrees besweer.

Die bloed van Jesus praat ook van agter die voorhangsel met ons (Hebreërs 6:19), waar dit op die hemelse versoendeksel geplaas is. Die stem van Jesus se bloed van genade word in heerlikheid gehoor - en dit klink harder op as die stemme van al die engele wat die troon van God omring.

Sy bloed pleit harder vir jou in die hemel as wat al jou sondes téén jou op die aarde kan pleit.

"...maar Hy, omdat Hy vir ewig bly, besit 'n priesterskap wat nie op ander oorgaan nie. Daarom kan Hy ook volkome red die wat deur Hom tot God gaan, omdat Hy altyd leef om vir hulle in te tree" (Hebreërs 7:24-25).

JESUS SE BLOED MOET TOEGEPAS WORD

Die bloed van Jesus is ook *“die bloed van die besprenkeling*" (Hebreërs 12:24). David Wilkerson verduidelik dit só:

Dit is nie 'n fisieke besprenkeling nie; nee, dit is 'n
wettige, geestelike ooreenkoms. Hy sprinkel die bloed op
ons harte as 'n reaksie op ons geloof.
En tensy ons waarlik in die krag van sy offer op
Golgota glo, kan die bloed van Jesus nie
enige effek op ons siele hê nie!

Dit beteken dat Jesus se bloed toegepaste bloed is - toegepas op ons harte en lewens. Dit bring vergifnis, vrede en verlossing. Die bloed het geen praktiese nut vir ons tensy dit op ons gewetes toegepas word nie, net soos wat die bloed van die paaslam ook geen nut vir die Israeliete in Egipte kon hê tensy dit aan die deurkosyne aangebring is nie. God het vir Sy mense gesê: *"...as **Ek die bloed sien,** sal Ek by julle verbygaan"* (Exodus 12:13, klem bygevoeg).

Ek hoop dat ons oë het om God se groot verlossende liefdesdaad in die offer van die Here Jesus Christus te sien en dat ons die insig het om dit te verstaan! Daar is vandag baie mense wat met afkeer dink aan die storting van bloed wat so 'n integrale deel van die Ou-Testamentiese offerstelsel was en die Nuwe-Testamentiese leer van Christus se bloed ewe aanstootlik vind. Daarom vind hulle die liedere wat die noodsaaklikheid en krag van Christus se bloed beklemtoon, ook aanstootlik en hou hulle nie van predikers wat preek oor die effektiwiteit van die bloed nie.

Mense wat wegskram van die gestorte bloed van Christus, is blind vir die Woord van God, vir die heiligheid van God en vir die aakligheid en radikale aard van die sonde. Die sonde is 'n verskriklike realiteit en het daarom is 'n radikale geneesmiddel nodig. 'n Plaasvervangende dood is die enigste weg na die lewe.

Die stigter van 'n godsdiensgroep wat die godheid van Jesus ontken, het gesê dat die bloed van Christus net so min beteken het toe dit op Golgota gestort is as toe dit in die are van die lewende Jesus gevloei het. Maar ons weet *"sonder bloedvergieting vind daar geen vergifnis plaas nie"* (Hebreërs 9*:22)*. Die bloed van Jesus Christus is uitgestort omdat dit slegs daardeur is wat ons die lewe deelagtig kon word.

DIE LAM IS WAARDIG

In een van my visioene van die hemel, het ek die engele in die hemel oor Hom hoor roep: *"Die Lam wat geslag is, is waardig om te ontvang die krag en rykdom en wysheid en sterkte en eer en heerlikheid en lof"* (Openbaring 5:12). Die hemel het uitgeroep en gejubel oor die geweldige betekenis van Christus se offer.

Te midde van hierdie uitroepe en lofprysinge, het ek die kinders van God hoor sing. Dit was die mooiste, mees melodieuse sang wat ek nog ooit gehoor het. Dit was soos die *"geluid van baie waters"*

(Openbaring 19:6) en dit was asof dit oor die heelal weerklink. Daar was geen hoekie van die heelal waar die pragtige sang nié gehoor kon word nie. Watter lied het hulle gesing?

"Toe sing hulle 'n nuwe lied en sê: "U is waardig om die boek oop te maak, want U is geslag en het ons vir God met U bloed gekoop uit elke stam en taal en volk en nasie, en het ons konings en priesters vir onse God gemaak, en ons sal as konings op die aarde heers" (Openbaring 5:9-10).

Net so het gelowiges deur die eeue heen met groot vreugde die bloed van Christus besing. Loof God vir die ewige krag van die bloed van die Lam!

Chapter 5: The blood of the New Covenant

"He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."
—Hebrews 9:15

With Christ's ultimate sacrifice, a new covenant was established between God and His people. This new covenant, which replaced the old one that had been entered into long ago when Moses sprinkled blood on the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai, was inaugurated by the blood of Jesus Christ at the base of Calvary.

The writer of Hebrews repeated what the Lord had foretold through the prophet Jeremiah about this new covenant:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a ***new covenant*** *with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:* ***I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***
(Hebrews 8:8-10, emphasis added)

The new covenant gives us an internal love for God and His ways rather than only an external compliance with His Word. In addition, when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commit ourselves to Him, we can be assured that our covenant-keeping God will always keep His Word. He will be our God, and we will be His people.

Jesus said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:28). The covenant that God has with us is sealed by the blood of Jesus. Without the shedding of His blood, there could be no ratification of the covenant. It would not be valid. Because of His blood, however, we can receive all the promises of this new covenant. The Bible is the testament that reveals to us what God has given to us in Christ. In coming chapters, we will look at the many blessings that have been granted us through the blood of Jesus.

JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Jesus was not only the Sacrifice for our sins, but He was also the Great High Priest who took the offering of His precious blood to the mercy seat of God. *"Now* [Jesus] *has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6).

The writer of Hebrews understood clearly the role of Christ as Mediator. He explained the superiority of the new covenant of blood and of the new Deliverer:

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
(Hebrews 9:12-14)

The new covenant does not just cover sin. It actually cleanses our consciences and frees us to live for God in peace and joy.

When God showed me the vision of Jesus dying on the cross, I saw His blood pouring out like the blood of a slaughtered animal. I saw the loincloth they used to cover Him, and it was soaked in red blood. I saw blood flowing down His legs. I saw it dripping from His feet. How much blood He must have shed! When He finally breathed His last breath, I saw angels coming and going, picking up the blood and taking it to God.

I said to one of them, "What are you doing?"

The angel answered, "We're taking this to heaven. It's a sacrifice to God for the sins of the world." It took what looked like thousands of angels to carry His blood back to heaven. Our blessed Lord Himself, the One who was crucified, would, as our Great High Priest, apply the precious blood on the mercy seat there. I saw my blessed Lord sprinkle the blood He shed on earth as a sin offering for me—and for every other person who would believe in Him.

Again, the tabernacle was only a shadow of the spiritual reality, but Jesus has gone into the Holy of Holies in heaven, the *true* Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God. He has taken with Him *"better*

sacrifices" (Hebrews 9:23)—His own atoning blood and Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. All the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings find their fulfillment and completion in Him.

Jesus has gone into God's presence on behalf of His people just as the high priest of old did for the Hebrew people. This is where the Lord is now, where He *"always lives to make intercession for* [us]" (Hebrews 7:25). He effectively deals with the power of sin in our lives when we commit ourselves fully to Him. His atoning blood satisfies the justice of God, and through His blood we obtain forgiveness.

There is a great difference between Jesus the Great High Priest and the high priests who served under the old covenant. Israel's high priest could not stay in the Holy of Holies. After the brief sacrificial ritual, he had to leave that holy place. As he left, the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tabernacle fell behind him again, shutting him out for another year.

Yet when Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross, the Bible says that the curtain in the temple was ripped from top to bottom. (See Matthew 27:51.) This signified that the old covenant had been done away with and the new covenant through Jesus Christ had come into being.

This comparison becomes more real and meaningful with a careful study of the high priestly ministry of Christ. Hebrews 7-9 discusses various aspects of the high priest's ministry and culminates with an explanation of Jesus entering heaven as the High Priest and delivering the blood of the sacrifice—the sacrifice of Himself—before the heavenly mercy seat. It is a beautiful picture of the completed work of Christ. When I saw Jesus enter into heaven's Most Holy Place in the vision, He did not falter or hesitate. He marched boldly to heaven's altar and poured out His blood. It was a decisive and final action.

The eternal price has been paid. The Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world has once and for all taken away the sins of the world. Now He stands as the faithful and merciful High Priest, His sacrificial work completed. The blood has been delivered, and mankind can be redeemed. *"He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities"* (Isaiah 53:11).

Our High Priest is fully qualified to fulfill His roles as Mediator and Intercessor. He has opened a *"new and living way"* (Hebrews 10:20) by which each of us can approach God. Because of His sacrifice, we are now sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. We can indeed come boldly into God's presence with great confidence, assured of His grace. (See Hebrews 4:16.) The benefits of His intercessory work are now open to us. We can experience the "sweet hour of prayer," because He

...bids me at my Father's throne Make all my wants and wishes known.[1]

It is a great comfort to realize that we have a High Priest who represents us before the throne of God. This is especially true since we have an *"accuser"* (Revelation 12:10) who constantly opposes us and brings charges against us before the Father. Christ is our Advocate in God's presence.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.... Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.

(Hebrews 2:17; 3:1-2)

Because Christ is the *"Faithful and True"* (Revelation 19:11), I can trust Him. Because He is victorious, He can help me escape the tempter's snare. Because He earnestly calls me to seek His face, I can confidently open my heart to Him. This High Priest—because of His accomplishments through the blood— assures me of deliverance, freedom, forgiveness, and power.

The New Covenant People of God

Through the new covenant, God has gained for Himself a new covenant people. There is no longer any distinction between Jew or Gentile for those who have believed in the atoning work of Christ on their behalf. Instead, a new people of God has been created. Paul wrote, *"There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all"* (Colossians 3:11), and *"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation"* (Ephesians 2:14).

The Bible indicates that God takes very seriously the relationship He has with the church. The church was not an afterthought in His mind, nor was it a creation of man. It was part of the divine initiative, and it depended on the precious blood of Jesus Christ for its genesis.

Nowhere is this truth clearer than in the exhortation of Paul to the Ephesian believers in Acts 20:28:

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Whatever criticisms the world has about the church, and no matter how neglectful so-called Christians may become in their devotion to it, this fact remains: The church originated in the mind of God and was purchased with the precious blood of the Savior. No one can fully understand the nature of the church without taking into consideration the blood of the Lamb that bought it.

UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY OF GOD

Today, we use the word *church* in many different ways. It distinguishes religious people from nonreligious; it describes denominations (Methodist, Church of God, Baptist, and so on); it refers to a building where people gather to worship; it sometimes means something universal and sometimes something local. Because we use these various definitions for the church, its true meaning is often obscured.

The church is the spiritual family of God. It is the Christian fellowship bought by the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It had its beginning in the counsels of eternity and its literal genesis when Jesus gathered His disciples around Him, taught them, and commissioned them to do His work in the world. It flamed into visible existence on the Day of Pentecost. (See Acts 2.)

The word *church* appears numerous times in the New Testament. In the great majority of cases, it refers to a local body of believers. In other cases, it refers to the church in general, sometimes called the universal church. We use that term today to signify the body of Christ that transcends time and reaches across the centuries, including all people, living and dead, who have trusted in Christ and have become part of the family of God, bought with the blood of the Lamb.

The church is both a divine institution and a human one. It is divine because Jesus said, "I *will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). It is also human because Paul reminded us, as he was discussing the building of the church, that *"we are God's fellow workers"* (1 Corinthians 3:9). Wherever the Holy Spirit unites believers to Christ and to other believers, the church exists.

The church is called to fulfill the work that the Lord of the church has given it to do. It is a place where the gospel is proclaimed, where God is worshiped, where the Spirit directs the conduct of the worshipers, where baptism and the Lord's Supper are practiced, and where people are *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3).

THE REVELATION OF the Church

The revelation of the nature of the church in the New Testament is multifaceted. Only by considering the names and metaphors that the Word uses to identify it can we understand the mystery and beauty of God's plan for the church as the new covenant people of God.

The Church as Bride

First, the church is revealed as the bride of Christ. This depiction fulfills the Old Testament view of the people of God as espoused to Jehovah. The imagery of the bride is a revelation of the loving and special relationship that exists between Christ and the church. A wonderfully clear statement of this relationship appears in Ephesians 5:25: *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."*

In eastern lands during Bible times (and even in some places today), it was customary for the groom to pay a price to the family of the bride for the privilege of marrying her. The wonderful and awesome truth revealed here is that Christ paid the price for His bride, the church, and the price was His own precious blood.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BODY

Perhaps one of the most familiar pictures of the church in the New Testament is the body of Christ. *"He is the head of the body, the church"* (Colossians 1:18). Paul frequently used this image, as he did in Ephesians 1:22-23: *"He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* Once more, in 1 Corinthians 12:12, we read, *"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."*

This analogy assures us that our Head provides wisdom and direction as the body carries out His work. This is the ideal relationship that should always exist between the One who paid the blood-price and the church He purchased. Christ's blood gives life to His body.

Some people object to the idea of the "body" also being the "bride," asking how one can also be the other. This objection dissolves when we remember that, in God's view, husband and wife are *"one*

flesh" (Matthew 19:5). The depiction of the church as a bride conveys a message of love; its depiction as a body conveys a message of life.

The Church as Branches, flock, Living Stones

The New Testament is rich with other images of the church, including the following: He is the vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5). He is the shepherd, and we are the flock. (See, for example, John 10:16.) He is the foundation, and we are the building blocks. (See, for example, 1 Peter 2:4-5.)

All these images have one thing in common: They are living things. In the instance of an inanimate image—stones— Peter labeled them *"living stones"* (v. 5), underlining the truth that the church is a living organism.

The new covenant is about new life— spiritual life through the precious blood of Christ.

Hoofstuk 5: Die bloed van die nuwe verbond

"'En daarom is Hy Middelaar van 'n nuwe testament, sodat, terwyl daar 'n dood plaasgevind het vir die verlossing van die oortredinge onder die eerste testament, die wat geroepe is, die belofte van die ewige erfenis kan ontvang."
- Hebreërs 9:15

Met Christus se hoogste offer is 'n nuwe verbond tussen God en Sy mense daargestel. Hierdie nuwe verbond het die ou een vervang wat baie lank gelede ingestel is toe Moses bloed oor die Israeliete gesprinkel het aan die voet van Sinai en is ingewy deur die bloed van Jesus op Golgota.

Die skrywer van die Hebreërbrief herhaal wat die Here deur die profeet Jeremia omtrent hierdie nuwe verbond sê:
"Kyk daar kom dae, spreek die Here, dat Ek met die huis van Israel en die huis van Juda 'n ***nuwe verbond*** *tot stand sal bring, nie volgens die verbond wat Ek met hulle vaders gemaak het op die dag toe Ek hulle aan die hand geneem het om hulle uit Egipteland uit te lei nie; want hulle het nie gebly by My verbond nie, en Ek het hulle veronagsaam, spreek die Here. Want dit is die verbond wat Ek ná dié dae sal sluit met die huis van Israel, spreek die Here:* ***Ek sal my wette in hulle verstand gee en dit op hulle hart skrywe; en Ek sal vir hulle 'n God wees, en hulle sal vir my 'n volk wees"*** (Hebreërs 8:8-10, klem bygevoeg).
Die nuwe verbond gee vir ons in ons harte 'n liefde vir God in plaas daarvan dat ons net op 'n uiterlike manier binne sy Woord probeer leef. En as ons Jesus Christus as Here en Verlosser aanneem en onsself

aan Hom oorgee, kan ons seker wees dat ons God aan Sy verbond en Sy Woord getrou sal wees. Hy sal ons God wees en ons sal Sy kinders wees.

Jesus het gesê: *"Want dit is My bloed, die bloed van die nuwe testament, wat vir baie uitgestort word tot vergifnis van sondes"* (Matthéus 26:28). Die verbond wat God met ons het, is deur die bloed van Jesus verseël. Sonder die storting van Sy bloed kon daar geen bekragtiging van die verbond gewees het nie. Dit sou nie geldig gewees het nie. Maar danksy Sy bloed, kan ons al die beloftes van die nuwe verbond ontvang. Die Bybel is die testament wat aan ons openbaar wat God vir ons in Christus gegee het. Ons gaan in die hoof- stukke wat kom, kyk na die talle seëninge wat ons deur die bloed van Jesus ontvang.

JESUS, ONS GROOT HOËPRIESTER

Jesus was nie net die Offer vir ons sondes nie - Hy was ook die Groot Hoëpriester wat die kosbare bloedoffer na God se versoendeksel toe geneem het. *"Maar nou het Hy (Jesus) 'n voortrefliker bediening verkry vir sover Hy ook Middelaar is van 'n beter verbond wat op beter beloftes wettelik gegrond is"* (Hebreërs 8:6).

Dit is duidelik dat die skrywer van die Hebreërbrief verstaan het wat Jesus se Middelaarsrol is. Hy verduidelik waar die nuwe verbond beter as die oue is, asook die rol van die Middelaar:

"...ook nie met die bloed van bokke en kalwers nie, maar met Sy eie bloed, een maal ingegaan in die heiligdom en 'n ewige verlos- sing teweeggebring. Want as die bloed van stiere en bokke en die as van 'n vers wat die verontreinigdes besprinkel, heilig maak tot reiniging van die vlees, hoeveel te meer sal die bloed van Christus, wat Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer het, julle gewete reinig van dooie werke om die lewende God te dien" (Hebreërs 9:12-14).

Die nuwe verbond bedek nie slegs die sonde nie. Dit was die gewete skoon en maak ons vry om in vrede en met vreugde vir God te leef.

Toe die Here my die visioen van Jesus aan die kruis laat sien het, het ek gesien hoe Sy bloed vloei soos dié van 'n dier wat geslag is. Ek het die lendekleed gesien waarmee hulle Hom bedek het en dit was bloedrooi van Sy bloed. Ek het gesien hoe die bloed teen Sy bene afloop. Ek het gesien hoe dit van Sy voete afdrup. Hoeveel bloed het Hy nie gestort nie! En toe Hy uiteindelik Sy laaste asem uitblaas, het ek engele sien kom en gaan soos hulle die bloed opgetel en dit na God toe geneem het.

Ek het vir een van hulle gevra wat hulle doen.

Die engel het geantwoord: "Ons neem dit hemel toe. Dit is 'n offer aan God vir die sondes van die wêreld." Dit was asof daar duisende engele nodig was om sy bloed hemel toe te dra. Ons dierbare Here self, die Een wat gekruisig is, sou, as die Groot Hoëpriester, daardie

kosbare bloed op die hemelse versoendeksel aanbring. Ek het gesien hoe my Here die bloed wat op die aarde gestort is as 'n sondeoffer vir my en vir elke ander mens wat in Hom sou glo, daar sprinkel.

Die tabernakel was maar net 'n heenwysing na die geestelike realiteit, maar Jesus het na die hemelse Allerheiligste toe gegaan, na die ware Allerheiligste - Hy het in die teenwoordigheid van God ingegaan. Hy het "beter offers" met Hom saamgeneem (Hebreërs 9:23) - Sy eie bloed en Homself as die finale soenoffer. Al die Ou-Testamentiese offers vind hulle vervulling in Hom.

Jesus het namens Sy mense in God se teenwoordigheid ingegaan, net soos die hoëpriester van ouds namens die Hebreërs in die teenwoordigheid van God ingegaan het. Dit is waar die Here nou is, waar "*Hy altyd leef om vir (ons) in te tree*" (Hebreërs 7:25). Hy handel effektief met die krag van die sonde in ons lewens as ons onsself volkome aan Hom onderwerp. Sy bloedoffer voldoen aan God se vereiste vir geregtigheid en deur sy bloed verkry ons vergif- nis.

Daar is 'n groot verskil tussen Jesus, die Groot Hoë- priester en die hoëpriesters wat onder die ou verbond geleef en gewerk het. Die hoëpriester van Israel kon nie in die Allerheiligste bly nie. Ná die kort offerritueel, moes hy daardie heilige plek verlaat. En dan het die voorhangsel, wat die Allerheiligste van die res van die tabernakel geskei het, agter hom toegegaan en hom vir nog 'n jaar daar uitgehou.

Maar ons lees in die Bybel dat toe Jesus Homself aan die kruis geoffer het, die voorhangsel van bo tot onder middel- deur geskeur het (verwys Matthéus 27:51). Dit het daarop gedui dat die ou verbond finaal verby was en dat die nuwe verbond in Jesus Christus ingestel is.

Hierdie vergelyking word nog 'n groter realiteit en raak des te meer betekenisvol as ons Jesus se hoëpriesterlike bediening noukeurig bestudeer. Hebreërs 7-9 bespreek ver- skeie aspekte van die hoëpriester se bediening en kulmineer met 'n verduideliking van Jesus wat as Hoëpriester in die hemel ingaan en die bloed van die offer - en onthou, die offer was Hyself - na die hemelse versoendeksel toe neem. Dit is 'n pragtige beeld van Christus se voltooide werk. Toe ek Jesus in die visioen in die hemelse Allerheiligste sien in- gaan het, het Hy nie vir 'n oomblik gehuiwer nie. Hy het met vrymoedigheid na die hemelse altaar toe geloop en Sy bloed daarop uitgegiet.

Die ewige prys is betaal. Die Lam wat van die grondlegging van die aarde af geslag is, het eens en vir altyd die sondes van die wêreld weggeneem. Nou staan Hy as die getroue en genadige Hoëpriester, met Sy offer klaar en afgehandel. Die bloed is afgelewer en die mensdom kan verlos word. *"Weens die moeitevolle lyde van Sy siel sal Hy dit sien en versadig word; deur sy kennis sal my Kneg, die Regverdige, baie regverdig maak; en Hy sal hulle skuld dra"* (Jesaja 53:11).

Ons Hoëpriester is meer as toegerus om Sy rol as Middelaar te

vervul. Hy het 'n "*nuwe en lewende weg*" (Hebreërs 10:20) oopgemaak waardeur elkeen van ons tot God kan nader. Danksy die offer wat Hy gebring het, is ons nou seuns en dogters van die hemelse Vader. Ons kan vreesloos en met vrymoedigheid in God se teenwoordigheid ingaan, seker van Sy genade (verwys Hebreërs 4:16). Die voordele van Sy middelaarswerk is nou tot ons beskikking. Ons kan ook daardie "soete gebedsuur" beleef omdat Hy ons nooi om elke wens en behoefte voor die Vader se troon bekend te maak (William Walford in *Sweet Hour of Prayer)*.

Dit is baie bemoedigend om te weet dat ons *'n* Hoëpriester het wat ons voor die troon van God verteenwoordig. Dit is veral vertroostend aangesien daar ook 'n "aanklaer" is (Openbaring 12:10) wat ons sonder ophou aankla by die Vader. Christus is ons Advokaat in God se teenwoordigheid.

"Daarom moes Hy in alle opsigte aan sy broeders gelyk word, so- dat Hy 'n barmhartige en getroue hoëpriester kon wees in die dinge wat in betrekking tot God staan, om die sondes van die volk te versoen ... Daarom, heïlige broeders, deelgenote van die hemelse roeping, let op die Apostel en Hoëpriester van ons belydenis, Christus Jesus, wat getrou was aan Hom wat Hom aangestel het, net soos Moses ook in sy hele huis" (Hebreërs 2:17; 3:1-2).

Omdat Christus "*Getrou en Waaragtig*" is, (Openbaring 19:11), kan ek Hom vertrou. Omdat Hy oorwin het, kan Hy my help om uit die versoeker se strikke te bly. Omdat Hy wil hê dat ek Sy aangesig moet soek, kan ek my hart met vrymoedigheid vir Hom oopmaak. Hierdie Hoëpriester, wat deur Sy bloed alles bereik het, verseker my van verlossing, vryheid, vergifnis en krag.

DIE KINDERS VAN DIE NUWE VERBOND

God het deur die nuwe verbond vir Hom 'n nuwe ver- bondsvolk byeengebring. Daar is nie meer enige onderskeid tussen Jood en nie-Jood vir dié wat glo dat Christus vir hulle versoening bewerkstellig het nie. In hulle plek is daar nou 'n nuwe verbondsvolk. Paulus skryf: *"...waar daar nie Griek en Jood, besnedene en onbesnedene, barbaar, Skith, slaaf, vryman is nie, maar Christus is alles en in almal"* (Kolossense 3:11) en: *"Want Hy is ons vrede, Hy wat albei een gemaak en die middelmuur van skeiding afgebreek het"* (Efésiërs 2:14).

Die Bybel stel dit duidelik dat die verhouding tussen God en die kerk vir Hom baie belangrik is. Die kerk was nie maar vir Hom 'n nágedagte nie - dit was ook nie iets wat uit die mens ontstaan het nie. Dit was deel van Sy goddelike plan en dit het ook vanuit die kosbare bloed van Jesus Christus ontstaan.

Nêrens blyk hierdie waarheid duideliker as uit Paulus se vermaning aan die gelowiges in Efese in Handelinge 20:28 nie:

"Gee dan ag op julleself en op die hele kudde waaroor die Heilige Gees julle as opsieners aangestel het om as herders die gemeente van God te versorg, wat Hy deur Sy eie bloed verkry het."
Ongeag van hoe die wêreld die kerk mag kritiseer en ongeag van hoe sogenaamde Christene in hulle toewyding aan die kerk mag faal, een ding staan soos 'n paal bo water: die kerk het as deel van God se plan ontstaan en is met die kosbare bloed van die Verlosser gekoop. Niemand kan die aard van die kerk ten volle verstaan sonder om ook in ag te neem dat dit deur die bloed van die Lam gekoop is nie.

BEGRIP VIR DIE GEESTELIKE FAMILIE VAN GOD

Ons gebruik vandag die woord kerk op baie verskillende maniere. Dit onderskei gelowiges van ongelowiges; dit beskryf denominasies; dit verwys na die gebou waarin mense saamkom om te aanbid; soms dui dit op iets universeels en soms op iets plaasliks. En omdat ons soveel definisies aan die woord kerk heg, is die ware betekenis van die woord dikwels onduidelik.

Die kerk is die geestelike familie van God. Dit is die Christelike gemeenskap wat deur die bloed van die Lam gekoop is - die bloed van die Lam wat van die grondlegging van die aarde reeds geslag is. Dit is reeds in die ewigheid vasgelê en is letterlik tot stand gebring toe Jesus Sy dissipels om Hom byeengeroep en hulle afgevaardig het om Sy werk op aarde te doen. En dit het op Pinkster nuwe momentum gekry (verwys Handelinge 2).

Die woord kerk en gemeente kom herhaaldelik in die Nuwe Testament voor. In die meeste gevalle verwys dit na 'n plaaslike liggaam van gelowiges. In ander gevalle ver- wys dit na die kerk in die algemeen - dít wat ons soms die universele kerk noem. Ons gebruik daardie term vandag om te dui op die liggaam van Christus wat oor die grense van tyd en eeue reik en alle mense, lewend en dood, insluit wat in Hom geglo het en steeds glo en dus deel geword het van die familie van God - die familie wat deur die bloed van die Lam gekoop is.

Die kerk is sowel 'n goddelike as 'n menslike instelling. Dit is goddelik omdat Jesus gesê het: *"...sal Ek my gemeente bou, en die poorte van die doderyk sal dit nie oorweldig nie" (Matthéus 16:18). Dit is ook menslik, omdat Paulus, waar hy die opbou van die gemeente bespreek, herinner:""Want ons is medewerkers van God"* (1 Korinthiërs 3:9). Waar die Heilige Gees gelowiges met Christus en met mekaar verenig, bestaan die kerk.

Die kerk word geroep om die werk te doen wat die Here van die kerk daaraan gee. Dit is 'n plek waar die evangelie verkondig word, waar God aanbid word, waar die Gees die gedrag van die aanbidders lei, waar die nagmaal gevier word en waar mense *"ernstig strewe om die*

eenheid van die Gees te bewaar deur die band van die vrede" (Efésiërs 4:3).

DIE OPENBARING VAN DIE KERK

Die openbaring van die aard van die kerk in die Nuwe Testament het baie fasette. Ons kan slegs die skoonheid en verborgenheid van God se plan vir die kerk as kinders van die nuwe verbond begryp as ons gaan kyk na die name en metafore wat die Woord gebruik om dit te identifiseer.

DIE KERK AS BRUID

Die kerk word eerstens as die bruid van Christus geopen- baar. Dit is 'n vervulling van die Ou-Testamentiese siening dat die volk van God met Hom getroud is. Die beeld van die bruid is 'n openbaring van die liefdevolle en baie spesiale verhouding wat daar tussen Christus en die kerk is. Efésiërs 5:25 gee vir ons 'n pragtige verklaring van dié verhouding: "Manne, julle moet jul eie vroue liefhê, soos Christus ook die gemeente liefgehad en Homself daarvoor oorgegee het."

In die oosterse lande was dit in die Bybelse tyd - en dit geld vandag nog in party lande - die gebruik dat die bruidegom 'n bruidskat aan die bruid se familie betaal vir die voorreg om met haar te mag trou. Die wonderlike waarheid wat hier geopenbaar word, is dat Christus die prys betaal het vir Sy bruid, die kerk - en daardie prys was Sy eie kosbare bloed.

DIE KERK AS CHRISTUS SE LIGGAAM

Een van die bekendste beelde van die kerk in die Nuwe Testament is dié van die kerk as liggaam van Christus. *"En Hy is die hoof van die liggaam, naamlik die gemeente"* (Kolos- sense 1:18). Paulus gebruik hierdie beeld herhaaldelik, soos byvoorbeeld in Efésiërs 1:22-23: *"En Hy het alle dinge onder Sy voete onderwerp en Hom as hoof bo alle dinge aan die gemeente gegee, wat Sy liggaam is, die volheid van Hom wat alles in almal vervul."* Dan lees ons weer in 1 Korinthiërs 12:12: *"Want net soos die liggaam een is en baie lede het, en al die lede van die een liggaam, al is hulle baie, een liggaam is, so ook Christus."*

Hierdie analogie gee vir ons die versekering dat ons Hoof insig en leiding gee soos wat die liggaam Sy werk doen. Dit is die ideale verhouding wat altyd tussen die Een wat die bloed-prys betaal het en die kerk wat Hy daarmee gekoop het, behoort te bestaan. Christus se bloed gee lewe aan Sy liggaam.

Daar is mense wat beswaar maak teen die gedagte dat die liggaam ook die bruid kan wees en wat vra hoe so iets dan moontlik is. Hulle beswaar verdwyn as ons in gedagte hou dat man en vrou, vanuit God se perspektief, *"een vlees"* is (Matthéus 19:5). Die voorstelling van die kerk as bruid openbaar 'n boodskap van liefde; die voorstelling van die

kerk as liggaam openbaar 'n boodskap van lewe.

DIE KERK AS LOTE, KUDDE, LEWENDE BOUSTENE

Die Nuwe Testament is ryk aan ander beelde van die kerk, beelde soos die volgende: Hy is die wynstok en ons is die lote (Johannes 15:5). Hy is die herder en ons is die kudde (verwys bv. Johannes 10:16). Hy is die fondament en ons is die stene (verwys bv. 1 Petrus 2:4-5).

Al hierdie beelde het een ding in gemeen: hulle is lewende dinge. Waar die Bybel na dooie dinge verwys - die stene - praat Petrus van "lewende stene" (vers 5) en onderstreep só die waarheid dat die kerk lewend is.

In die nuwe verbond gaan dit oor lewe - geestelike lewe deur die kosbare bloed van Christus.

Chapter 6: THE POWER OF THE BLOODLINE

"When I see the blood, I will pass over you." —Exodus 12:13

Our salvation in Christ includes the protective covering of His precious blood. When we pray for protection in this way, we are affirming that we believe Jesus provided a covering for ourselves and our families through the Atonement. The angels go to us immediately to seal and protect us. Through the blood covenant, we have this hedge of protection, which I call the "bloodline."

The bloodline designates the Family of God

Let's begin by looking at the nature of the bloodline. First, it is a defining line. Spiritually speaking, the blood of Jesus forms a line of demarcation between believers and those who are separated and alienated from God. When the heavenly Father sees the blood of Jesus applied to our hearts, that is a signal to all of heaven that we are His own. Only the blood of Christ saves the believer from separation from God.

Until you cross the bloodline, you have no hope of salvation. When you put your faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, however, you are protected by the blood.

The Bloodline divides

The cross has great power to unite people to God and each other, but it also can cause a significant division in human relations. The relationship between the redeemed and the Redeemer is greater than any human relationship, even one of flesh and blood. When one person is a believer and another is not, the spiritual division between them is vast. Sometimes, this division can cause conflicts, even in one's family. Jesus said,

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in- law against her mother-in-law"; and "a man's enemies will be those of his own household." He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.
(Matthew 10:34-37)

Jesus also told of the day when all of mankind—every man, woman and child who has ever lived—will experience the division established by the blood of Jesus Christ.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:31-32)

The bloodline will be the difference on that day!

An example of this division can be seen in the story of the Israelites in Egypt, which we began to look at in an earlier chapter. On nine occasions, Moses took God's demands to Pharaoh, telling him to let the Israelites journey into the wilderness to worship. Each time Pharaoh refused, and each time a plague was sent upon Egypt. Both the Egyptians and the Israelites suffered the effects of the first three plagues. But when it was time for the fourth plague, the Lord instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh,

In that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell.. .in order that you may know that I am the Lord *in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people.*
(Exodus 8:22-23)

THE BLOODLINE AS PROTECTION

The bloodline is also a sign of protection. The precious blood of Christ is set forever before the eyes of God, and we are safe as long as we are under it. The tenth and final plague in Egypt was the death of the firstborn in every house. The horror of that particular evening must have been overwhelming. This is the Bible's account of it:

And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

(Exodus 12:29-30)

The Israelite families, however, were protected. God, who is merciful and full of compassion, provided a way for His people to be shielded from this terrible plague; it was through the shedding of blood in the observance of the first Passover. We are told that *"just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did"* (v. 28). This statement is in regard to the instruction to kill the Passover lamb, eat the Passover meal, and, especially, to spread the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes.

The Lord told the Israelites that the death angel would pass through Egypt, but that

the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:13)

The blood would separate them from the disobedient Egyptians in God's sight.

The clear meaning to the Israelites was this: "Do not cross the bloodline or you will not be protected." Likewise, God's instructions to the death angel must have been, "Do not cross the bloodline!" The Israelites believed God and placed the blood of the Passover lamb between themselves and the destroying angel.

The Passover was the first feast unto the Lord that God commanded the nation of Israel to keep. (See Exodus 12:13-20.) He told them to observe this feast perpetually to remember the deliverance He was about to grant them. Today, we know that Christ,

our Passover, was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). More powerful than the power of death and evil is the blood of the Lamb of God!

When I began to seek the Lord about the blood of Christ, He prompted me to pray and dedicate everything around me to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, through the blood of the Lamb. He said that I would have visions of angels coming from heaven, laden with crosses. As I dedicated churches, buildings, houses, children, and other things to the Lord, I saw these angels. Also, it was as if the blood was on the ground in the form of a circle or a line of the blood of the Lamb, and the demons could not cross over it. A liberating revelation came to me when God revealed to me the truth about the bloodline.

In the Israelites' old covenant with God, the people were explicitly promised that if they kept the law, God would honor and prosper them (Deuteronomy 28). If they failed to keep the law, however, they would incur the punishment of God. Now we have a new and better covenant:

The days are coming, says the Lord*, when I will make a new covenant...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the* Lord*. But this is the covenant that I will make...: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*
(Jeremiah 31:31-33)

When God sees the blood applied to your life, He will defend and protect you. The bloodline is a line of defense around believers who have trusted in Him. Just as the bloodline protected the Israelites in Egypt, so Christ's bloodline will protect you and keep you safe. If God Himself had great respect for the blood marking the doors of His obedient people, how much more will Satan have to respect the bloodline marking the children of God when he sees the blood of God's own Son applied to their hearts!

The Bloodline delivers

God's instructions for the partaking of the first Passover meal were specific: *"Thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover"* (Exodus 12:11).

God had deliverance planned for His people, and He intended to do it quickly. While the blood on the doorways protected those within the Israelites' houses, they ate the roasted flesh of the lamb from which the blood had come. They ate it as though they would soon be taking a long journey. God intended the deliverance of Israel to be as fast as the hand of death traveling through Egypt.

In the homes of the Israelites that evening, I believe there was a sense of peace, protection, and satisfaction. The people had consumed a hearty meal, and they sat in anticipation with their shoes on their feet and their garments on their backs. Within the confines of their blood-streaked doors, they awaited Moses' command to move out.

Meanwhile, in the homes of the Egyptians, those who had prepared to settle in for an evening of rest suddenly found that death had entered their homes through unguarded doors. The Bible tells us what happened next:

So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste.

For they said, "We shall all be dead."

(Exodus 12:30-33)

The bloodline made the difference between life and death. The presence of the blood of the Passover lambs on the doorways of the Hebrews provided their deliverance. Without the blood, Israel would have mourned as deeply for her firstborn as Egypt did. Without the blood, Israel would have been journeying to burial tombs instead of to the Promised Land.

Through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Passover Lamb, we can be delivered from sin and harm today. People who have been enslaved by physical, emotional, and mental lusts to the point that they have no recourse in the world have applied the precious blood of the Lamb to their hearts and been delivered, and an indescribable freedom has overtaken them.

The cross has become our doorway into the divinely protected place of deliverance and peace. I invite you to receive Christ into your heart and find refuge behind His bloodline today.

PLEADING THE BLOOD

I want to conclude this chapter with an explanation of what it means to "plead the blood." God has shown me the importance of the cross and the blood covenant with its accompanying protection. "Pleading the blood of Jesus" is more than just a catch- phrase. It is, in a sense, a legal term. It means to invoke what Christ has done on the cross over a particular situation or person. A blood covering is provided through faith in God, prayer, and belief in the covenant of God. I have learned that when we are praying for people, and God impresses upon us to cover people with the blood, we should say, "I cover you with the blood of Jesus, the covenant of God!"

We should never be ashamed of the blood of the Lamb. When we say that we cover others with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, this means that we claim the blood that He shed, which enabled us to enter into the new covenant with God. It means that Almighty God will look down from heaven and watch over us and protect us. It means that we can pray over our children and cover them with the covenant blood of Jesus Christ. Demons tremble at the name of Jesus, and they flee at the blood of the Lamb.

Pleading the blood gives us bold and confident access to God's power and providence. As the Scripture says, we can have *"boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through.. .His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20).*

For example, we can plead the blood for ourselves when the devil tries to torment us with the memory of past sins that have already been forgiven. Doing this reminds us and the devil that God has forgotten our sins because of Christ's sacrifice and His blood. The Word of God says, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"* (Revelation 12:11). I believe that *"the word of* [our] *testimony"* simply means believing in the efficacy of the blood.

A believer who pleads the blood in a time of dire circumstance or attack by the enemy is calling on the power and authority of Christ's blood. When we plead the blood, we acknowledge and testify to the overcoming power of the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. To defeat the devil, you need to stand on the blood and proclaim its power! In the next few chapters, we will look at specific applications of the

power of the blood in our lives.

Hoofstuk 6: Die krag van die bloedlyn

"...as Ek die bloed sien, sal Ek by julle verbygaan."
-*Exodus* 12:13

Ons verlossing in Christus sluit die beskerming deur Sy kosbare bloed in. As ons op dié manier om beskerming bid, bevestig ons dat ons glo dat Jesus deur Sy soendood vir ons en ons families voorsiening gemaak het. Dan kom die engele onmiddellik na ons toe om ons af te seël en te beskerm. Ons is deur die bloedverbond met hierdie beskerming geseën en ek noem dit die "bloedlyn".

DIE BLOEDLYN DUI OP GOD SE FAMILIE

Kom ons kyk eerstens na die aard van die bloedlyn. Dit identifiseer in die eerste plek God se familie. Geestelik gesproke trek die bloed van Jesus 'n duidelike lyn tussen dié wat glo en dié wat van God vervreem is. As die hemel- se Vader sien dat die bloed van Jesus op ons harte toegepas is, is dit 'n duidelike teken vir die hemel dat ons aan Hom behoort. Die bloed van Christus is al wat die gelowige van vervreemding van God kan red.

Jy móét daardie bloedlyn oorsteek, anders is daar vir jou geen hoop op verlossing nie. As jy egter in die verlossende bloed van Jesus glo, word jy daardeur beskerm.

DIE BLOEDLYN SKEI

Die kruis het groot krag om mense met God en met mekaar te verenig, maar dit kan ook verhoudings laat skeur. Die verhouding tussen die verloste en die Verlosser is sterker as enige menslike verhoudings, selfs dié van vlees en bloed. En waar die een persoon gelowig is en die ander nié, kom daar geestelik skeiding - dit is onafwendbaar. Hierdie skei- ding kan tot konflik lei, selfs binne families en gesinne. Jesus het gesê:

"Moenie dink dat Ek gekom het om vrede op aarde te bring nie. Ek het nie gekom om vrede te bring nie, maar die swaard. Want Ek het gekom om tweedrag te verwek tussen 'n man en sy vader, en tussen ’n dogter en haar moeder, en 'n skoondogter en haar skoonmoeder. En 'n mens se huisgenote sal sy vyande wees. Wie vader of moeder bo My liefhet, is My nie waardig nie; en wie seun of dogter bo My liefhet, is My nie waardig nie" (Matthéus 10:34-37).

Jesus het ook gepraat oor die dag wanneer die ganse mens- dom - elke man, vrou en kind wat nog ooit geleef het - die skeiding wat Sy bloed tot gevolg het, sal ervaar:

"En waneer die Seun van die mens in Sy heerlikheid kom en al die heilige

engele saam met Hom, dan sal Hy op Sy heerlike troon sit; en voor Hom sal al die nasies versamel word, en Hy sal hulle van mekaar afskei soos die herder die skape van die bokke afskei" (Matthéus: 25:31-32).
Op daardie dag sal die bloedlyn die verskil maak!

Die verhaal van die Israeliete in Egipte is 'n goeie voor- beeld van hierdie skeiding - ons het reeds in 'n vorige hoofstuk begin om daarna te kyk. Nege keer het Moses vir die farao gaan sê dat die Here wou hê dat Sy volk Hom in die woestyn moes gaan aanbid. Die farao het elke keer geweier - en elke keer het God 'n plaag oor Egipte gestuur. Sowel die Egiptenaars as die Israeliete het die gevolge van die eerste drie plae gedra. Maar toe dit by die vierde plaag kom, het God Moses beveel om vir die farao te sê:
"Maar Ek sal op dié dag met die land Goosen, waarin my volk woon, 'n uitsondering maak, dat daar geen steekvlieë sal wees nie; sodat jy kan weet dat Ek die Here is in die land. En Ek sal 'n ver- lossing stel tussen My volk en jou volk. More sal hierdie teken plaasvind" (Exodus 8:22-23).

DIE BLOEDLYN AS BESKERMING

Die bloedlyn is ook 'n teken van beskerming. Die kosbare bloed van Christus is vir ewig voor die oë van God neer- gesit en ons is veilig solank ons daardeur bedek word. Die tiende en laaste plaag in Egipte was die dood van elke eersgeborene in Egipte. Dit moes 'n verskriklike nag in die land gewees het. Dít is wat die Bybel daaromtrent sê:
"En middernag het die Here al die eersgeborenes in Egipteland getref, van die eersgeborene van Farao af wat op sy troon gesit het, tot die eersgeborene van die gevangene toe wat in die gevangenis was, en al die eersgeborenes van die diere. Toe staan Farao in die nag op, hy en al sy dienaars en al die Egiptenaars, en daar was 'n groot gejammer in Egipte, want daar was geen huis waar geen dooie in was nie" (Exodus 12:29-30).
Die Israeliete was egter beskerm. Die genadige God het 'n manier voorsien waarop hulle teen dié verskriklike plaag beskerm kon word: dit was deur die stort van bloed en die instelling van die eerste Paasfees. Ons lees: *"Soos die Here Moses en Aaron beveel het,* so *het hulle gedoen"* (v 28). Dit dui op God se opdrag om die paaslam te slag, die paasmaaltyd te eet en veral om die bloed van die paaslam aan die deur- kosyne van hulle huise te smeer.
God het vir die Israeliete gesê dat die doodsengel deur Egipte sou trek:
"Maar die bloed sal vir julle 'n teken wees aan die huise waarin julle is: as Ek die bloed sien, sal Ek by julle verbygaan. En daar sal geen verderflike plaag onder julle wees wanneer Ek Egipteland tref nie" (Exodus 12:13).
Die bloed sou hulle voor God van die ongehoorsame Egiptenaars onderskei.

Die boodskap aan die Israeliete was duidelik: "Moenie die bloedlyn oorsteek nie, want dan sal julle nie beskerm word nie." God se opdrag

aan die doodsengel het waarskynlik gelui: "Moenie die bloedlyn oorsteek nie!" Die Israeliete het geglo dat die Here die bloed van die paaslam tussen hulle en die doodsengel geplaas het.

Die Paasfees was die eerste fees wat die Here die volk van Israel beveel het om te onderhou (verwys Exodus 12:13-20). Hy het vir hulle gesê om dié fees gereeld te vier om die verlossing wat Hy aan hulle sou gee, te herdenk. Ons weet vandag dat Christus, ons Paaslam, vir ons geoffer is (1 Korintihiërs 5:7). Die bloed van die Lam van God is magtiger as die dood en as boosheid.

Toe ek begin het om die aangesig van die Here oor die bloed van Christus te soek, het Hy my gedring om te bid en alles óm my deur die bloed van die Lam aan die Vader, die Seun en die Heilige Gees op te dra. Hy het gesê dat ek visioene sou sien van engele wat met kruise uit die hemel sou kom. En soos ek kerke, geboue, huise, kinders en ander dinge aan die Here opgedra het, het ek daardie engele gesien. Dit was ook asof die bloed op die grond was en wel in die vorm van 'n sirkel of 'n lyn - dit was die bloed van die Lam en die duiwels kon dit nie oorsteek nie. God het dan ook die waarheid omtrent die bloedlyn aan my geopenbaar.

In die Israeliete se ou verbond met God, het hulle die belofte ontvang dat Hy hulle sou eer en dat dit met hulle goed sou gaan as hulle die wet sou onderhou (Deuteronómium 28). Maar as hulle nié aan die wet getrou sou wees nie, sou die Here hulle straf. Nou het ons egter 'n nuwe en beter verbond:

"Kyk, daar kom dae, spreek die Here, dat Ek met die huis van Israel en die huis van Juda 'n nuwe verbond sal sluit; nie soos die verbond wat Ek met julle vaders gesluit het op dié dag toe Ek hulle hand gegryp het om hulle uit Egipteland uit te lei nie - My verbond wat húlle verbreek het, alhoewel Ek gebieder oor hulle was, spreek die Here. Maar dit is die verbond wat Ek ná dié dae met die huis van Israel sal sluit, spreek die Here: Ek gee My wet in hulle binneste en skrywe dit op hulle hart; en Ek sal vir hidle 'n God wees, en hulle sal vir My 'n volk wees" (Jeremia 31:31- 33).

As God sien dat die bloed op jou lewe toegepas is, sal Hy jou beskerm. Die bloedlyn is 'n beskermende lyn óm gelowiges wat in Hom glo en op Hom vertrou. Net soos wat die bloedlyn die Israeliete in Egipte beskerm het, so sal Christus se bloedlyn jou beskerm en jou veilig hou. As God self respek gehad het vir die bloed aan die deure van Sy gehoorsame volk, hoeveel te meer sal die Satan dan nie ontsag hê vir die bloedlyn wat Hy as beskerming óm die kinders van God se harte sal sien nie!

DIE BLOEDLYN IS GETROU

God se opdragte oor die volk se deelname aan die paasmaaltyd was baie spesifiek: *"En só moet julle dit eet: Julle heupe moet omgord wees,*

julle skoene aan jul voete en juile staf in jul hand; baie haastig moet julle dit eet. 'n Pasga van die Here is dit" (Exodus 12:11).

God het beplan om Sy volk te red en Hy het beplan om dit vinnig te doen. Terwyl die bloed aan hulle deurkosyne almal in die Israeliete se huise beskerm het, het hulle die vleis van die lammers wie se bloed aan die kosyne gesmeer was, geëet. Hulle het geëet soos mense wat op die punt was om 'n lang reis te onderneem. God het beplan dat hulle verlossing net so vinnig sou wees soos die doodshand wat deur Egipte getrek het.

Ek glo dat daar daardie nag 'n gevoel van vrede, beskerming en tevredenheid in die huise van die Israeliete was. Hulle het 'n heerlike maaltyd geniet en hulle het 'n gevoel van afwagting gehad terwyl hulle daar met hulle reisklere aan gewag het op Moses se bevel om te trek.

Maar in die huise van die Egiptenaars was daar in plaas van rus, skielik dood - dood wat deur hulle onbeskermde deure binnegekom het. Die Bybel vertel vir ons wat volgende gebeur het:

"Toe staan Farao in die nag op, hy en al sy dienaars en al die Egiptenaars, en daar was 'n groot gejammer in Egipte, want daar was geen huis waar geen dooie in was nie. Daarop het hy Moses en Aaron in die nag laat roep en gesê: Maak julle klaar, trek weg onder my volk uit, julle sowel as die kinders van Israel, en gaan dien die Here soos julle gespreek het. Neem ook julle kleinvee en julle beeste saam soos julle gespreek het, en gaan weg en seën my ook. En die Egiptenaars het by die volk sterk aangehou - om hulle gou uit die land uit te stuur. Want hulle het gesê: Ons is almal dood!" (Exodus 12:30-33).

Die bloedlyn het die verskil tussen dood en lewe gemaak. Die aanwesigheid van die bloed van die paaslammers aan die deurkosyne van die Hebreërs het tot gevolg gehad dat hulle gered is. Sonder daardie bloed sou hulle net soos die Egiptenaars oor hulle eersgeborenes getreur het. Sonder die bloed sou hulle begrafnis gehou het in plaas van getrek het.

Deur die bloed van Jesus Christus, God se Paaslam, kan ons vandag van die sonde bevry word. Mense wat die slawe was van fisieke, emosionele en ander begeertes en vir wie daar geen uitweg in die wêreld was nie, het die kosbare bloed van die Lam in hulle harte toegepas en is van die sonde verlos en bevry.

Die kruis het ons deur na 'n plek van verlossing en vrede geword - 'n plek wat deur God beskerm word. Ek nooi jou om Christus vandag in jou hart aan te neem en vandag nog die beskerming van Sy bloedlyn te geniet.

PLEIT DIE BLOED

Ek wil hierdie hoofstuk afsluit met 'n verduideliking van wat dit

beteken om "die bloed te pleit." God het my gewys hoe belangrik die kruis en die bloedverbond is, asook die beskerming wat daarmee saamgaan. Om die bloed van Jesus te pleit is meer as net 'n gesegde. In 'n sekere sin is dit 'n regsterm. Dit beteken dat 'n mens dít wat Christus aan die kruis gedoen het, oor 'n bepaalde situasie of persoon af- smeek. Daardie situasie of persoon word deur jou geloof in God en in Sy verbond met die bloed bedek. Ek het geleer dat ons, wanneer ons vir iemand bid en God dit op ons harte lê om die persoon met die bloed te bedek, moet sê: "Ek bedek jou met die bloed van Jesus, die verbond van God!"

Ons moet nooit skaam wees vir die bloed van die Lam nie. As ons sê dat ons ander met die kosbare bloed van Jesus Christus bedek, beteken dit dat ons aanspraak maak op die bloed wat Hy gestort het - die bloed waardeur ons deel verkry het aan die nuwe verbond met God. Dit beteken dat die almagtige God vanuit die hemel oor ons sal afkyk en ons sal beskerm. Dit beteken dat ons oor ons kinders kan bid en hulle met die verbondsbloed van Jesus Christus kan bedek. Demone sidder as die naam van Jesus genoem word en hulle vlug voor die bloed van die Lam.

Om die bloed te pleit, gee vir ons die vrymoedigheid om deel te hê aan God se krag en voorsiening. Die Skrif sê ons kan *"vrymoedigheid (hê) om in die heiligdom in te gaan deur die bloed van Jesus op die nuwe en lewende weg wat Hy vir ons in- gewy het deur die voorhangsel heen, dit is Sy vlees"* (Hebreërs 10:19-20).

Ons kan ook byvoorbeeld die bloed vir onsself pleit as die duiwel ons treiter deur ons gedurig aan ou sondes wat lankal reeds vergewe is, te laat terugdink. Om dit te doen herinner ons én die duiwel daaraan dat God ons sondes danksy Christus se offer en Sy bloed vergewe het. Die Woord van God sê: *“En hulle het hom oorwin deur die bloed van die Lam en deur die woord van hulle getuienis"* (Open- baring 12:11). Ek glo dat "die woord van (ons) getuienis" eenvoudig beteken dat ons in die effektiwiteit van die bloed sal glo.

'n Gelowige wat die bloed onder moeilike omstandig- hede pleit, of wanneer hy deur die vyand aangeval word, roep die krag en gesag van Christus se bloed aan. As ons die bloed pleit, erken ons en getuig ons van die krag wat Jesus se offer het om alle magte en owerhede te oorkom. As jy die Satan wil oorwin, moet jy op die bloed en op die krag van die bloed aanspraak maak. Ons gaan in die volgende paar hoofstukke kyk na spesifieke toepassings van die krag van die bloed in ons lewens.

Chapter 7: **Salvation THROUGH THE BLOOD**

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."
—Romans 5:9

Salvation is the first application of the blood of Christ to our lives. Although we've talked about this theme in various ways throughout this book, it deserves an even closer look because of its enormous importance.

Of all the revelations that God has given to me, none has impacted me in a greater way than the knowledge that the core of true faith, regardless of any disagreements Christians may have over denominational doctrines, is the fact that salvation comes only through the blood of Jesus Christ. In fact, in the New Testament, the blood of Christ is linked directly to the saving significance of Jesus' death twenty-five times.

I believe that the first encounter a person has with the blood of Jesus, when it is applied to his or her heart by faith, is by far the most meaningful and life-altering experience that person will ever have. Every born- again believer has this encounter with the blood of Jesus in a spiritual, yet very real, sense when he or she repents and believes God for justification through Christ. Nothing on earth can compare with the sense of cleansing and refreshing that comes when Jesus washes away every sin and transgression.

When Jesus' blood is applied to a person's life, it renders him spotless before God. What rejoicing takes place in the life of one who has been born again! At first glance, it may seem as if the new believer is the same person, having all his former physical features and nature. Yet, those natural features often somehow seem renewed. A sense of newness surrounds the newly born child of God. He or she often takes on a beauty that is unmistakable to the observer.

Yet the internal transformation that takes place at the time of the new birth defies physical description and stands as one of the most mysterious events in Christian experience. The Bible tells us, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have*

passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The most drastic changes take place in the heart, soul, and mind. The guilt that has characterized the individual for so long is lifted. Guilt is one of the most troublesome mental stresses that a person can suffer. It weighs heavily on the conscience and constantly nags at the heart and mind like an ulcer.

Guilt has the ability to awaken us out of a peaceful sleep to torment us with blazing accusations. It builds walls between us and our neighbors. It distorts our conversations with anxiety and seems to loom over our shoulders during every waking moment. Guilt is one of Satan's most versatile tools of destruction.

Yet where the blood of Jesus flows, all guilt can be washed away. When real salvation comes, real guilt is removed. Without guilt, the heart is free to soar as the heart of Adam did when he walked with God in the cool of the day. (See Genesis 3:8.) Without guilt, the mind is free to contemplate the joys of knowing the God of forgiveness in a way it had never before imagined.

Let's look at the many ways that the blood of Jesus provides for our salvation.

The Blood Provides Redemption

First, it is by the blood that we are redeemed from sin. Outside the church, one of the only places the term *redemption* is heard is in the pawnshop. A customer comes in and leaves something of value—his watch, for instance— for which the pawnbroker pays him a certain amount of money. If the man wishes to reclaim his watch, he must return and pay the pawnbroker the amount he had received from him plus an additional fee. This reclaiming of his property by payment is called "redemption."

Our souls were in pawn, so to speak, but the blood of Jesus paid the redemption price that nothing else was sufficient to pay. The blood of Jesus Christ alone has the power to liberate us from the prison of sin. It can cleanse the vilest transgressors and make them pure and whole. The apostle Peter reminded us that we were not redeemed with corruptible, or temporary, things but with the precious blood of Jesus:

You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

(1 Peter 1:18-21)

The Scripture plainly says that *"without shedding of blood there is no remission* [forgiveness]" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus affirmed, *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:28). Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 both tell us that in Christ *"we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."*

Again, only Jesus' blood can redeem us. Money is a powerful commodity, but there is not enough money in the world to redeem a single sinner. Forgiveness is not cheap; it cost God the life of His Son. When Jesus sacrificed His life, it hurt Him deeply. There was agonizing pain involved. He knew that He had to carry the weight of the whole world on His shoulders, but He was willing to do it in order

to save us from eternal separation from God. The blood of Christ is the bedrock of our faith and lives.

It was a glorious revelation to me to understand that God gives us His life through the blood of Jesus. We must depend on the blood to do what God says it will do. When we do, we will not try to rely on our own works or performance, which cannot save us. If you believe that you can perform well enough or be good enough to merit God's approval without the blood of Jesus, you are deceived. We do not obtain salvation through works or good deeds. We gain salvation through faith in the blood of Jesus and by our verbal affirmation that we want Jesus to be the Lord and King over our lives. (See Romans 10:9.)

As we saw earlier, in the Old Testament, a curtain or veil separated the priest—the one who offered the blood on the altar—and the person seeking forgiveness and cleansing. In a spiritual sense, the curtain that separates us from God is the reality of sin in our lives. Sin has an undeniable power in our fleshly nature. This veil of "sinful flesh" can be removed from us only when sin is taken away from us. We cannot take away the veil in our own strength. We cannot remove sin from our flesh by doing good deeds or by any of our own efforts. But there is hope: The Lamb of God has removed the veil.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)

This means that when Jesus came to earth as a human being, He removed the veil by offering up His body as our Substitute, thus canceling the power of sinful flesh within us. *"A new and living way…He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh* [body]" (Hebrew 10:20). Now it is a glorious privilege for us to enter into the heavenly Holy of Holies and dwell there in the presence of God. (See verse 22.) All this is possible because the Lamb of God shed His blood for us.

The Blood Provides Atonement

The various animals and offerings given for atonement in the Old Testament taught us two things. First, nothing man could do could completely atone, once and for all, for the sins of mankind. Second, the all-inclusive nature of the various sacrifices of atonement prefigured the completeness of the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. Also, just as atonement was limited to the people of God who abided by a covenant with Him, so redemption and atonement today are limited to those who accept Jesus by faith in His shed blood.

Jesus Christ entered into the very throne room of His Father, carrying His own precious blood. Today His blood calls to us some 3,500 years after the first Day of Atonement, urging us, "Enter in. Do not worship from afar! You have standing before God!"

The blood of Jesus was the price paid to free us from the prison of sin. Jesus' atonement covers *all* your sins: those that are intentional and those that are unintentional; those that are abhorrent and those that appear trivial.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS PROVIDES JUSTIFICATION

Again, the blood of Jesus does not just cover our sins, but it completely pays for them, fulfilling the righteous requirements of God. *Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.* (Romans 3:24-25)

The Bible clearly states that we are justified by His blood. This means that we are made to be as if we had *never* sinned.

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
(Romans 5:8-9)

One of the results of justification is that we have peace with God, and this enables us to experience a reconciled relationship to Him. *"In Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"* (Ephesians 2:13). The blood of Christ saves us from the wrath of God (Romans 5:9). It also enables us to overcome the power of our accuser, Satan (Revelation 12:11). Because of the blood of Christ, Satan is powerless to convict us of sin.

THE BLOOD PROVIDES COMPLETE FORGIVENESS

When the Word of God says, *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22), the word *"remission"* is not the word we use when we talk about a cancer being in remission. If cancer is in remission, then it is possible for it to come back. The word in this passage is "a dismissal, release."[1] It means to totally annihilate as if it had never existed. It can never come back. The Spirit of God assures us that sins once forgiven can never be held against us again. Our sins are totally removed, and God does not remember them any longer. When we ask God to forgive our sins, the blood of Jesus removes them totally.

David spoke of this idea when he said, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12). Note the geographical truth of David's statement. Before man discovered that the earth is round, God obviously knew the shape of the planet, and He revealed through David a wondrous aspect of salvation: just how far God removes our sins from us. For example, if you were to board an airplane and begin flying north, at a certain point, you would begin going south again. If you travel far enough south, you will start to go north again. Yet east and west never meet. You can board an airplane and travel east or west to infinity.

David said that's how far God has removed our sins from us. The blood of Jesus Christ not only washes away our sins, but it also eradicates sin from us and leaves our souls spotless, as only He can make them.

THE BLOOD PROVIDES CLEANSING

The blood of Jesus also *"cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). Often, in my visions from God, I have seen images of sin hanging like heavy millstones around the necks of individuals. These desolate images are graphic illustrations of the spiritual state of all who have not confessed and believed in Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

When we accept Him, however, the precious blood of the Lamb of God purifies us from all the transgressions we have ever committed. *"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"* (Revelation 1:5). The cross transforms us forever. I know that I am totally clean and restored.

There is nothing quite like the power and confidence you feel when you know you are innocent. If you know your cause is just and that you are in the right, then you can face anyone who might try to condemn you. We are not innocent in ourselves because of the sins we have committed. Therefore, we are powerless to defend ourselves against God's judgment. However, the blood of Christ changes everything. Hebrews 13:12 tells us that we are sanctified through the blood of Jesus. This means we are made holy before God.

Although similar in nature, purification and reconciliation are two separate actions. Through the blood of Christ, a believer who receives the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart is purified from sin and guilt, which enables him to be reconciled to God at the same time.

This is what we desperately need: the sin- forgiving, guilt-removing, heart-cleansing, conscience-purifying blood of Jesus. Wash in it, and you will be *"whiter than snow"* (Psalm 51:7).

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

I am so grateful for the blood of Jesus. Many times in services, I see the walls covered in red. I see the front of the altar covered in red. As people come up to give their lives to God, I see them washed and cleansed. They say, "Oh, I feel so clean. I feel like I've been washed in the river of life." Many times, I have also seen demons release their control of the people they have possessed and then flee.

Some time ago, I was in Trinidad preaching the gospel. I strongly

emphasized the power of the blood of Jesus to save people from their sins. When I gave the altar invitation, hundreds of people—most of them Muslims— came forward to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

THE BLOOD PROVIDES RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL LIFE

The blood of Jesus also has the power of resurrection. Just as a body emptied of blood becomes a corpse, so faith devoid of the cleansing blood of Jesus is dead faith. Or it is misplaced faith in a dead cause.

Medicine sometimes has impressive power to heal the sick, but only the blood of Jesus Christ can raise the dead. Any fool with a gun can take a life, but only the blood of Jesus can bring life back. Through Jesus' blood, those who believe in Him will survive death itself; they will live eternally with God! Jesus said,

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. (John 6:47-51)

The age-old hunger in the human heart is to live forever. We want to know that we will still exist after we die. Jesus has provided for our hunger to be filled. All major religions teach some form of existence after death, but only Christianity can say that its founder *demonstrated* life after death.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
(Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus came to give abundant life on earth (John 10:10), but He also came to give eternal life forever: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die"* (John 11:25-26). Since life is in the blood, it is through His blood that we will live after death. I believe the Bible tells us that Jesus Himself was resurrected *by His own blood:*

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting

covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

Because Jesus lives, believers will also survive the deaths of their bodies through the precious blood of the Lamb. One day, we will join the redeemed saints in heaven, along with the cherubim and the twenty-four elders (see Revelation 5:11), and we will sing, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"* (v. 12).

THE GREATEST SACRIFICE

The story is told of two children in the same family who were born with a rare blood type and had to be treated with extreme care by physicians. The little boy, who was only three years old, began to experience some grave health problems. The boy needed a blood transfusion, and his five-year-old sister was the only possible blood donor to be found. Carefully, the parents and doctors tried to explain the situation to the little girl: Her brother needed blood, and she was the only one who could give it to him.

The girl thought it over very carefully and finally consented for the doctors to take her blood and give it to her brother. As she lay on a table, a needle was inserted into her arm. She watched intently as her blood flowed into the plastic container that would be used to transfer it to her brother. When the procedure was finished, the nurse took the needle from her arm and told her, “It’s all over.”

Perplexed, the little girl asked, “But when do I die?” She had misunderstood what the procedure would mean for her, yet she willingly gave her blood, thinking it meant her own death.

Such a tender and loving spirit is rare today. Only a few of us would gladly give up our lives for our loved ones if it were necessary. Only one Person could atone for our sins by shedding His blood, and Jesus willingly and lovingly gave His body and blood that you and I might be saved. No one else was worthy. No one else could” have made the sacrifice and paid the price.

CHRIST IN US

From the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, God reveals that He wants a people who will praise and love Him. He knew that no one could keep the Law that was given through Moses, so He sent His own Son to redeem us and give us His Spirit. As we repent and confess our sins to the Lord, and as we give our lives to Him, He does something wonderful—He comes to dwell within us, and our fellowship with our heavenly Father is restored.

I urge you to accept Jesus and His great sacrifice for you. If you do not know Jesus, read the Bible and learn about Him. Understand who He really is. The Bible is the true Word of God, and it says you must be born anew into God's kingdom: *"Jesus answered and said to* [Nicodemus], *'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'"* (John 3:3).

Your sins can be washed away through the atonement Jesus accomplished by shedding His blood on the cross. Even if you think you are the worst person in the world, you can turn to Jesus for complete forgiveness. You can pray, "Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God and my Savior. I believe You died on the cross and rose again so that I can have new life in You. I ask You to wash away my sins through Your cleansing blood and make me clean. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I can now live for You. I commit my life to loving and serving You. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God will be faithful to forgive you and cleanse you completely. He will give you the gift of His Holy Spirit, who will live within you and enable you to obey and serve God. You will become a part of God's own family, and His angels will watch over you.

One day, the very Person who shed His blood for us will be our Judge. The Scripture says, *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). It would be well for us to keep the memory of His sacrifice fresh in our hearts at all times and to make a heartfelt commitment to Him. I urge you to do it now, for you do not know at what hour you will face Him as your Judge.

Trust in the Blood

You can never make atonement for your past sins, nor can you, by personal obedience, secure a title to the inheritance of glory. Yet Jesus is willing to take away all your sins and give you an inheritance in His glorious kingdom if you will only consent to entrust Him alone with your salvation.

Are you a child of God? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you struggle with sin in your life? Do you long to be free from the bonds that keep you from enjoying life at its best? Jesus shed His blood so that you can find forgiveness and peace. Believe in the sin-atoning blood of Jesus. It is greater than all your sin. Believe that He died for *you* and rose from the dead to forgive *you* of your sins.

The blood of the Lamb is applied to your heart by faith. The Scripture says, *"By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them"* (Hebrews 11:28). Trust in Jesus, your High Priest, to sprinkle your heart with His atoning blood.

His blood is also applied to your heart as you humble yourself before God and seek Him. In this often-quoted prayer for forgiveness, David acknowledged this truth:

You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise.

(Psalm 51:16-17)

Spiritually speaking, Jesus' blood is pleading for your soul. As I mentioned earlier, His blood is speaking more loudly on behalf of mercy for you than your sins are crying out against you. Yet the powerful blood of Jesus is of no use to you unless it is applied to your heart and conscience.

If you are already a believer, are you living in the full sense of your pardon and acceptance in Jesus? Do you have a present and assured salvation? If not, have you stopped short of the applied blood? Oh, come to *"the blood of sprinkling"* (Hebrews 12:24). Allow no guilt

to remain upon your conscience, but wash daily in the precious blood of Christ, which *"cleanses us from **all** sin"* (1 John 1:7, emphasis added).

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.[2]

Likewise, another poet has said,

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.[3]

The precious blood of the Lamb is our hope and comfort. There is no limit to what the blood has accomplished and can accomplish. Jesus' blood assures us of salvation and forgiveness. Again, we can't rely on our own goodness for our hope of forgiveness because we could never be good enough to atone for our sins. But Christ's blood has made perfect provision for us. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). His blood did what nothing or no one else ever could have done.

Hoofstuk 7: Verlossing deur die bloed

"Veel meer dan sal ons, nou dat ons geregverdig is in Sy bloed, deur Hom gered word van die toorn."

- Romeine 5:9

Verlossing is die eerste toepassing van die bloed van Christus op ons lewens. Hoewel ons reeds verskeie kere in die boek daarna verwys het, is dit só 'n belangrike tema dat ons nou meer indringend daarna

gaan kyk.

Van al die openbarings wat God vir my gegee het, is daar nie een wat 'n groter indruk op my gemaak het as die wete dat die kern van opregte geloof daarin lê dat verlossing slegs deur die bloed van Jesus Christus kom nie. Ongeag van verskille wat Christene oor leerstellings mag hê, dit is en bly die kern van ware geloof. In die Nuwe Testament word die bloed van Christus 25 keer direk verbind aan die verlossende betekenis van Jesus se dood.

Ek glo dat die eerste kennismaking wat 'n mens met die bloed van Jesus het, daardie oomblik wanneer jy dit in geloof op jou hart toepas, die mees betekenisvolle en le- wensveranderende oomblik in jou lewe is. Elke wedergebore gelowige het hierdie ontmoeting met die bloed van Jesus. Dit is 'n geestelike, dog baie werklike ervaring wan- neer jy jou sondes bely en God vir regverdigmaking deur Christus begin glo. Niks op aarde kan vergelyk met daardie gevoel van reiniging wat oor en deur jou spoel wanneer Jesus elke sonde en oortreding wegwas nie.

As Jesus se bloed op 'n mens se lewe toegepas word, beteken dit dat jy vlekkeloos voor God kan staan. Watter jubeling is daar nie in die lewe van een wat weer gebore is nie! Met die eerste oogopslag mag dit lyk asof dit dieselfde mens as voorheen is, want van buite lyk hy of sy dieselfde. En tog ook nie, want daar is iets nuuts omtrent die nuutgebore kind van God. Hy of sy het dikwels 'n skoonheid wat duidelik sigbaar is van buite.

Maar dit is die innerlike transformasie wat met die wedergeboorte plaasvind en byna nie met woorde beskryf kan word nie, wat een van die mees verborge gebeure in die Christen se lewe is. Die Bybel sê vir ons: *"Daarom, as iemand in Christus is, is hy 'n nuwe skepsel; die ou dinge het verbygegaan, kyk, dit het alles nuut geword"* (2 Korinthiërs 5:17).

Die mees drastiese veranderinge vind in die hart, siel en verstand plaas. Die skuld wat die individu vir so lank gekenmerk het, is weg. Skuld is een van die mees afbrekende emosies wat daar is. Dit rus swaar op die gewete en vreet soos 'n kanker aan die hart en verstand.

Skuld maak 'n mens wakker en treiter jou met skerp beskuldigings. Dit bou mure tussen mense. Dit maak gesprekke verwronge en loer oor 'n mens se skouer. Skuld is een van die Satan se veelsydigste en mees vernietigende wapens.

Maar waar die bloed van Jesus vloei, word alle skuld weggewas. Waar ware verlossing kom, is daar nie meer skuld nie. En as daar nie meer skuld is nie, is die hart vry om soos die hart van Adam te sweef toe Hy in die koel tyd van die dag saam met God gewandel het (verwys Génesis 3:8). Waar daar nie skuld is nie, is die verstand vry om oor God se vergifnis na te dink.

Kom ons kyk na die baie maniere waarop die bloed van Jesus vir ons verlossing voorsiening maak.

DIE BLOED MAAK VOORSIENING VIR BEVRYDING

Dit is in die eerste plek deur die bloed dat ons van die sonde bevry word. Ons siele is as 't ware aan die sonde ver- pand, maar die bloed van Jesus het die prys betaal - die prys wat deur niks anders betaal kon word nie. Slegs die bloed van Christus het die mag om ons uit die tronk van sonde te bevry. Dit kan die vuilste sondaars skoon was en hulle rein en heel maak. Die apostel Petrus herinner ons daaraan dat ons nie met tydelike dinge losgekoop is nie, maar met die kosbare bloed van Jesus:

"...julle weet dat julle nie deur verganklike dinge, silwer of goud, losgekoop is uit julle ydele lewenswandel wat deur die vaders oorgelewer is nie, maar deur die kosbare bloed van Christus, soos van 'n lam sonder gebrek en vlekkeloos, wat wel vooruit geken is voor die grondlegging van die wêreld, maar in hierdie laaste tye geopenbaar is om julle ontwil, julle wat deur Hom glo in God wat Hom uit die dode opgewek en Hom heerlikheid gegee het, sodat julle geloof en hoop op God kan wees” (1 Petrus 1:18-21).

Die Skrif sê duidelik: *"...sonder bloedvergieting vind daar geen vergifnis plaas nie"* (Hebreërs 9:22). Jesus het bevestig: *“Want dit is my bloed, die bloed van die nuwe testament, wat vir baie uitgestort word tot vergifnis van sondes"* (Matthéus 26:28). Efésiërs 1:7 en Kolossense 1:14 sê albei vir ons dat ons in Christus *“...die verlossing het deur sy bloed, naamlik die vergif- nis van die sondes."*

Weer eens is dit slegs Jesus se bloed wat ons kan verlos. Geld het baie mag, maar daar is nie genoeg geld in die hele wêreld om 'n enkele sondaar te bevry nie. Vergifnis is nie goedkoop nie - dit het God die lewe van Sy Seun gekos. Toe Jesus sy lewe geoffer het, het dit Hom diep seergemaak. Daar was geweldige pyn daarby betrokke. Hy het geweet dat Hy die las van die ganse wêreld op Sy skouers moes neem, maar Hy was bereid om dit te doen om ons te red so- dat ons nie tot in ewigheid van God vervreem sou wees nie. Die bloed van Christus is die rots van ons geloof en van ons lewens.

Dit was vir my 'n wonderlike openbaring om te verstaan dat God Sy lewe vir ons deur die bloed van Jesus gee. Ons moet daarop staatmaak dat die bloed sal doen wat God gesê het dit sal doen. As ons só daarop vertrou, sal ons nie probeer om op ons eie werke of prestasies staat te maak nie, want dit kan ons nie red nie. As jy glo dat jy goed genoeg kan presteer of goed genoeg kan wees om God se goed- keuring te verdien - dit is nou sónder die bloed van Jesus - dan word jy mislei. Verlossing kom nie deur werke of deur goeie dade nie. Verlossing kom slegs deur geloof in die bloed van Jesus en deur verbale bevestiging dat ons Jesus as Koning en Here van ons lewens wil hê (verwys Romeine 10:9).

Soos ons vroeër in die Ou Testament gesien het, is die priester - die een wat die bloed op die altaar moes offer - deur 'n voorhangsel

geskei van die mense wat die vergifnis wou hê. In 'n geestelike sin is die realiteit van die sonde in ons lewens die voorhangsel wat óns van God skei. Die sonde het mag oor ons vleeslike natuur. Hierdie voorhang- sel van die "sondige vlees" kan slegs verwyder word as die sonde van ons af weggeneem word. Ons kan nie die sonde van ons vlees af wegneem deur goeie dade te doen nie. Maar daar is hoop: die Lam van God het die voorhangsel weggeneem.
"Want God het - wat vir die wet onmoontlik was, omdat dit kragteloos was deur die vlees - deur sy eie Seun in die gelykheid van die sondige vlees te stuur, en dit ter wille van die sonde, die sonde veroordeel in die vlees, sodat die reg van die wet vervul kon word in ons wat nie na die vlees wandel nie, maar na die Gees" (Romeine 8:3-4).
Dit beteken dat toe Jesus as 'n mens na die wêreld toe gekom het, Hy die voorhangsel verwyder het deur Sy liggaam in ons plek te offer en só die krag van die sondige **vlees** in ons te breek. *"...op die nuwe en lewende weg wat Hy vir ons ingewy het deur die voorhangsel heen, dit is Sy vlees"* (Hebreërs 10:20). Nou beskik ons oor die heerlike voorreg om in die hemelse Allerheiligste in te gaan en daar in die teenwoordigheid van God te bly (verwys vers 22). En dit alles omdat die Lam van God Sy bloed vir ons gestort het.

DIE BLOED MAAK VOORSIENING VIR VERSOENING

Die diere- en ander offers wat in die Ou Testament gebring is om versoening te bewerkstellig, leer vir ons twee dinge. Die eerste is dat die mens niks kon doen om eens en vir al- tyd vir die sondes van die wêreld te vergoed nie. Die twee- de is dat die allesinsluitende aard van die verskillende offers 'n heenwysing is na die feit dat Christus se gestorte bloed vir alles sou betaal. En net soos wat versoening beperk was tot die mense wat binne die verbond met God geleef het, so is verlossing en versoening vandag ook beperk tot diegene wat Jesus en sy gestorte bloed in die geloof aanvaar.

Jesus Christus het sy kosbare bloed na die troonkamer van sy hemelse Vader toe geneem. Vandag, sowat 3 500 jaar ná die eerste Versoendag, roep sy bloed na ons: "Kom binne. Moenie van ver af aanbid nie! Jy mag voor God staan!"

Die bloed van Jesus is die prys wat betaal is om ons uit die tronk van die sonde te bevry. Jesus se versoening bedek al jou sondes: dié wat jy doelbewus gedoen het, asook dié wat onbewustelik gedoen is; dié "vieslike" sondes asook dié wat in jou oë na "mindere" sondes mag lyk.

DIE BLOED MAAK REGVERDIG

Die bloed van Jesus bedek nie net ons sondes nie, maar betaal die

volle prys vir hulle en voldoen só aan God se vereiste vir geregtigheid. *"...en hulle word deur Sy genade sonder verdienste geregverdig deur die verlossing wat in Christus Jesus is. Hom het God voor- gestel in Sy bloed as 'n versoening deur die geloof, om Sy geregtigheid te bewys deurdat Hy die sondes ongestraf laat bly het wat tevore gedoen is onder die verdraagsaamheid van God"* (Romeine 3:24-25).
Die Bybel sê duidelik dat ons deur Sy bloed geregverdig word. Dit beteken dat ons word soos mense wat nog nooit enige sonde gedoen het nie.
"...maar God bewys Sy liefde tot ons daarin dat Christus vir ons gesterf het toe ons nog sondaars was. Veel meer dan sal ons, nou dat ons geregverdig is in Sy bloed, deur Hom gered word van die toorn" (Romeine 5:8-9).
Een van die gevolge van regverdigmaking is dat 'n mens vrede met God het en dit stel jou in staat om in 'n nuwe verhouding met Hom te leef. *"Maar nou in Christus Jesus het julle wat vroeër ver was, naby gekom deur die bloed van Christus"* (Efésiërs 2:13). Die bloed van Christus red ons van die toorn van God (Romeine 5:9). Dit stel ons ook in staat om die krag van ons beskuldiger, Satan, te oorkom (Openbaring 12:11). Danksy die bloed van Christus kan hy ons nie meer van sonde aankla nie.

DIE BLOED MAAK VOORSIENING VIR VOLKOME VERGIFNIS

Die Woord sê duidelik: *"...sonder bloedvergieting vind daar geen vergifnis plaas nie"* (Hebreërs 9:22). Die woord wat hier met "vergifnis" vertaal is, dui op algehele bevryding, dus is dit asof die sonde glad nie bestaan het nie. Dit kan nooit weer terugkom nie. Die Gees van God gee vir ons die versekering dat ons sondes, as ons eers vergewe is, nooit weer teen ons gehou kan word nie. Ons sondes word heeltemal weggeneem en God dink nie meer daaraan nie. As ons Hom vra om ons te vergewe, neem die bloed van Jesus hulle heeltemal weg.

Dit is wat Dawid in gedagte gehad het toe hy gesê het: *"So ver as die ooste verwyderd is van die weste, so ver verwyder Hy ons oortredinge van ons"* (Psalm 103:12). Kyk na die geografiese waarheid in dé woorde. Nog lank voordat die mens ontdek het dat die wêreld rond was, het die Here presies geweet hoe dit lyk en het Hy deur Dawid 'n wonderlike aspek van verlossing geopenbaar, naamlik hoe ver God ons sondes van ons af verwyder. As jy byvoorbeeld op 'n vliegtuig sou klim en noord sou vlieg, sou jy in 'n stadium weer in 'n suidelike rigting begin beweeg. En as jy ver genoeg suid sou gaan, sou jy een of ander tyd weer in 'n noordelike rigting beweeg. Maar oos en wes ontmoet nooit nie. Jy kan tot in oneindigheid oos of wes vlieg.

Dawid sê dat dít is hoe ver God ons sondes van ons af verwyder. Die bloed van Jesus Christus was nie net ons sondes weg nie, maar

laat ons vlekkeloos, soos net Hy ons kan maak.

DIE BLOED MAAK VOORSIENING VIR REINIGING

Die bloed van Jesus *"reinig ons van alle sonde"* (1 Johannes 1:7). Ek het al dikwels in my visioene gesien hoe die sonde soos groot meulstene om die nekke van individue hang. Dit is sterk illustrasies van die geestelike toestand van almal wat nog nie hulle sondes bely het en Jesus Christus nog nie om vergifnis gevra het nie.

Maar as ons Hom aanneem, reinig die kosbare bloed van die Lam ons van al die oortredinge wat ons nog ooit gedoen het. *"Aan Hom wat ons liefgehad het en ons van ons son- des gewas het in Sy bloed"* (Openbaring 1:5). Die kruis verander 'n mens vir ewig. Jy weet dat jy heeltemal skoon en ver- nuwe is.

Daar is niks soos die krag en die vertroue wat jy voel as jy weet dat jy onskuldig is nie. As jy weet dat jou saak regverdig is en dat jy reg is, kan jy enigeen wat jou aankla, vierkantig in die oë kyk. Ons is nie in onsself onskuldig nie, want ons het almal sonde gedoen. Daarom is ons nie in staat om ons teen God se oordeel te verdedig nie. Maar die bloed van Christus verander alles. Hebreërs 13:12 sê dat ons deur Jesus se bloed geheilig is. Dit beteken dat ons voor God heilig gemaak is.

Reiniging en versoening is twee verskillende dinge. 'n Gelowige wat die Here Jesus Christus in sy hart aanneem, word deur die bloed van sonde en skuld gereinig en dit stel hom in staat om met God versoen te raak.

Ons het dit broodnodig: die bloed van Jesus wat sonde vergewe, harte reinig en gewetes skoon was. Was daarin, en jy sal witter wees as sneeu (Psalm 51:9).

"...hoeveel te meer sal die bloed van Christus, wat Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer het, julle gewete reinig van dooie werke om die lewende God te dien" (Hebreërs 9:14).

Ek is só dankbaar vir die bloed van Jesus. Ek sien dikwels tydens eredienste dat die mure bloedrooi word. Ek sien hoe die kansel rooi word. En wanneer die mense vorentoe loop om hulle lewens vir God te gee, sien ek hoe hulle skoon gewas word. Hulle sê: "Ek voel so skoon. Dit voel asof ek in die rivier van lewe gewas is." Ek het al dikwels gesien hoe demone hulle greep op mense laat los en van hulle af wegvlug.

Ek was 'n tyd gelede in Trinidad besig om die evangelie oor te dra. Ek het baie klem gelê op die krag van Jesus se bloed om mense van sonde te red. Toe ek die mense nooi om vorentoe te kom en hulle lewens vir God te gee, het honderde - en die meeste was Moslems - vorentoe gekom om die Here Jesus Christus as Verlosser aan te neem.

DIE BLOED MAAK VOORSIENING VIR OPSTANDING EN EWIGE LEWE

Die bloed van Jesus het ook opstandingskrag. Net soos 'n liggaam waarvan die bloed uitgeloop het, 'n lyk is, so is geloof sonder die reinigende bloed van Jesus, 'n dooie geloof. Of dit is 'n misplaaste geloof in 'n dooie saak.

Die mediese wetenskap is ongelooflik en kan baie doen om siekes te genees - maar slegs die bloed van Christus kan iemand uit die dood laat opstaan. Enigeen met 'n vuur- wapen kan 'n lewe neem, maar slegs die bloed van Jesus kan die lewe gee. Deur Jesus se bloed sal elkeen wat in Hom glo, die dood self oorleef - hulle sal tot in ewigheid saam met God leef! Jesus het gesê:

"Voorwaar, voorwaar Ek sê vir julle, wie in My glo, het die ewige lewe. Ek is die brood van die lewe. Julle vaders het die manna in die woestyn geëet en het gesterwe. Dít is die brood wat uit die hemel neerdaal, sodat iemand daarvan kan eet en nie sterwe nie. Ek is die lewende brood wat uit die hemel neergedaal het. As iemand van hierdie brood eet, sal hy lewe tot in ewigheid. En die brood wat Ek sal gee, is My vlees wat Ek vir die lewe van die wêreld sal gee" (Johannes 6:47-51).

Die mens hunker van altyd af nog om vir ewig te leef. Ons wil weet dat ons ná ons dood steeds sal bestaan. Jesus het daarvoor voorsiening gemaak. Al die belangrikste gelowe leer dat daar lewe na die dood is, maar die Christelike geloof is die enigste een waar die grondlegger van die geloof die lewe na die dood bewys het.

"Aangesien die kinders dan vlees en bloed deelagtig is, het Hy dit ook op dieselfde manier deelagtig geword, sodat Hy deur die dood hom tot niet kon maak wat mag oor die dood het - dit is die dui- wel - en almal kon bevry wat hulle hele lewe lank uit vrees vir die dood aan slawerny onderworpe was" (Hebreërs 2:14-15).

Jesus het gekom om oorvloedige lewe op aarde te gee (Johannes 10:10), maar Hy het ook gekom om die ewige lewe te gee: *"Jesus sê vir haar: Ek is die opstanding en die lewe; wie in My glo, sal lewe al het hy ook gesterwe; en elkeen wat lewe en in My glo, sal nooit sterwe tot in ewigheid nie"* (Johannes 11:25-26). Aangesien die lewe in die bloed is, is dit deur Sy bloed dat ons ná ons dood sal lewe. Ek glo dat die Bybel vir ons sê dat Jesus deur Sy eie bloed uit die dood opgewek is:

“Mag die God van vrede, wat die groot Herder van die skape, naamlik onse Here Jesus Christus, deur die bloed van die ewige testament uit die dode teruggebring het, julle volmaak in elke goeie werk, om Sy wil te doen, deur in julle te werk wat welbehaaglik is voor Hom deur Jesus Christus aan wie die heerlikheid toekom tot in alle ewigheid" (Hebreërs 13:20-21).

Omdat Jesus lewe, sal gelowiges ook die dood van hulle liggame deur die kosbare bloed van die Lam oorleef. Ons sal eendag, saam met die gerubs en die 24 ouderlinge, saam met die verloste heiliges in die

hemel wees (verwys Openbaring 5:11) en ons sal sing: *"Die Lam wat geslag is, is waardig om te ontvang die krag en rykdom en wysheid en sterkte en eer en heerlikheid en lof "* (v 12).

DIE GROOTSTE OFFER

Daar is 'n verhaal van twee kinders, 'n boetie en sussie, wat tot 'n baie seldsame bloedgroep behoort het. Toe die seuntjie so drie jaar oud was, het hy ernstige gesondheidsprobleme begin ontwikkel - soveel so, dat hy 'n bloedoortapping moes hê. Sy vyfjarige sussie was die enigste een wat hom met bloed kon help. Daarom het die dokters en hulle ouers probeer om vir haar te verduidelik wat die situasie was - dat haar boetie bloed nodig gehad het en dat sy die enigste een was wat dit vir hom kon gee.

Die dogtertjie het daaroor nagedink en ingestem dat die dokters haar bloed vir haar boetie kon gee. Sy het op 'n
tafel gaan lê en hulle het 'n naald in haar arm gesteek. Sy het aandagtig gekyk hoe haar bloed in die buis ingeloop het. Toe dit alles verby was, het die verpleegster die naald uitgetrek en vir haar gesê: "So ja, ons is klaar."

Verstom het die dogtertjie gevra: "Maar wanneer gaan ek dan dood?" Sy het verkeerd verstaan wat die gevolge vir haar sou wees, maar was gewillig om haar bloed te gee, al was sy onder die indruk dat dit haar dood sou beteken.

Soveel liefde sien 'n mens nie sommer vandag nie. Daar is maar min van ons wat ons lewens vir ons dierbares sal gee. Slegs een Persoon kon met Sy eie bloed vir ons sondes betaal - en Jesus het met liefde en oorgawe Sy liggaam en Sy bloed gegee sodat ek en jy gered kon word. Niemand anders kon daardie offer bring of daardie prys betaal nie.

CHRISTUS IN ONS

Van die begin van Génesis tot aan die einde van Openbaring openbaar God dat Hy 'n volk wil hê wat Hom sal loof en liefhê. Hy het geweet dat niemand in staat sou wees om die wet wat Hy aan Moses gegee het, te onderhou nie, daarom het Hy Sy eie Seun gestuur om ons te verlos en vir ons Sy Gees te gee. As ons ons sondes voor die Here bely en ons lewens vir Hom gee, doen Hy iets wonderliks - Hy kom woon in ons en ons gemeenskap met ons hemelse Vader is herstel.

Ek pleit by jou om Jesus en die geweldige offer wat Hy vir jou gebring het, te aanvaar. As jy Hom nie ken nie, lees dan die Bybel en leer van Hom. Verstaan wie Hy waarlik is. Die Bybel is die ware Woord van God en sê dat jy opnuut in God se koninkryk gebore moet word: *"Jesus antwoord en sê vir hom (Nikodémus): Voorwaar, voorwaar Ek sê vir jou, as iemand nie weer gebore word nie, kan hy die koninkryk*

van God nie sien nie" (Johannes 3:3).

Jou sondes kan weggewas word deur die versoening wat bewerkstellig is toe Jesus Sy bloed aan die kruis gestort het. Selfs al sou jy die slegste mens op aarde wees, kan jy jou nog
tot Jesus wend. Jy kan nog steeds bid: "Jesus, ek glo dat U die Seun van God en my Verlosser is. Ek glo dat U aan die kruis gesterf en weer opgestaan het sodat ek nuwe lewe in U kan hê. Ek vra U om my sondes deur U reinigende bloed weg te was en my rein te maak. Vul my met U Heilige Gees sodat ek nou vir U kan leef. Ek gee my lewe vir U en sal dit voortaan daaraan wy om U lief te hê en te dien. Amen."

As jy dié gebed met 'n opregte hart gebid het, sal God getrou wees en jou vergewe en volkome reinig. Hy sal jou die gawe van sy Heilige Gees gee, wat in jou sal woon en jou in staat sal stel om aan Hom gehoorsaam te wees en Hom te dien. Jy sal 'n lid word van God se eie familie en Sy engele sal oor jou waak.

Die Persoon wat Sy bloed vir jou gestort het, sal eendag ook ons Regter wees. Die Skrif sê: "En *net soos die mense bestem is om een maal te sterwe en daarna die oordeel"* (Hebreërs 9:27). Dit is goed om altyd te dink aan die offer wat Jesus vir ons gebring het en ons lewens opreg aan Hom te wy. Ek pleit by jou om dit te doen, want jy weet nie wanneer jy voor Hom as Regter sal staan nie.

VERTROU OP DIE BLOED

Jy kan nooit versoening vir die sondes van jou verlede bewerkstellig nie - net so min as wat jy deur gehoorsaamheid kan probeer om deel te verkry aan die heerlikheid van God. Nogtans is Jesus gewillig om al jou sondes weg te neem en vir jou 'n plek in sy heerlike koninkryk te gee as jy maar net bereid is om jou verlossing geheel en al aan Hom toe te vertrou.

Is jy 'n kind van God? Ken jy die Here Jesus Christus as jou Verlosser? Worstel jy met sonde in jou lewe? Smag jy daarna om vry te wees van die bande wat jou verhinder om die beste uit die lewe te haal? Jesus het sy bloed gestort sodat jy vergifnis en vrede kan hê. Glo in die versoenende bloed van Jesus. Dit is groter as al jou sonde. Glo dat Hy vir jou gesterf en weer opgestaan het - dat Hy gesterf en opgestaan het sodat jy vergifnis van jou sondes kan ontvang.

Die bloed van die Lam word deur die geloof op jou hart toegepas. Die Skrif sê: "*Deur die geloof het hy die pasga gehou en die besprenkeling van die bloed, sodat die verderwer hulle eers- geborenes nie sou aanraak nie"* (Hebreërs 11:28). Vertrou op Jesus, jou Hoëpriester en glo dat Hy jou hart met sy versoenende bloed sal besprinkel.

Sy bloed word ook op jou hart toegepas wanneer jy jou- self voor God verootmoedig en opreg na sy aangesig soek. In hierdie gebed om

vergifnis erken Dawid dié waarheid:
"Want U het geen lus is slagoffers nie, anders sou ek dit gee; in brandoffer het U geen behae nie. Die offers van God is 'n gebroke gees; 'n gebroke en verslae hart sal U, o God, nie verag nie!" (Psalm 51:18-19).
Jesus se bloed pleit op 'n geestelike vlak om jou siel. Soos ek vroeër gesê het, Sy bloed pleit harder om genade vir jou as wat jou sondes jou aankla. Maar die kragtige bloed van Jesus kan niks vir jou doen tensy dit op jou hart en gewete toegepas word nie.

As jy alreeds 'n gelowige is, wil ek jou vra of jy in die volle lig van jou versoening en die aanvaarding van Jesus leef. Is jy verseker van jou verlossing? Indien nie, het jy dalk nog nie sover gegaan om *"die bloed van die besprenkeling"* (Hebreërs 12:24) toe te pas nie. Moet geen skuld toe- laat om jou gewete te bly besoedel nie, maar was jou daagliks in die bloed van Jesus, wat ons *"van alle sonde"* reinig (1 Johannes 1:7, klembygevoeg).

Die kosbare bloed van die Lam is ons hoop en troos. Daar is geen beperking op wat die bloed teweeggebring het en steeds kan vermag nie. Jesus se bloed verseker ons van verlossing en vergifnis. Ons kan nie op ons eie goedheid staatmaak nie, want ons kan nooit in der ewigheid goed genoeg wees om vir ons sondes te vergoed nie. Maar Christus se bloed het in alle opsigte vir ons voorsiening gemaak. *“In Hom het ons die verlossing deur Sy bloed, die vergifnis van die misdade na die rykdom van die genade”* (Efésiërs 1:7).
Sy bloed het gedoen wat niks en niemand anders kon regkry nie.

Chapter 8: Peace through the blood

"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him."
—Isaiah 53:5

Peace is another main result of the application of the blood of Christ to our lives:

It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to ***reconcile all things to Himself, by Him,*** *whether things on earth or things in heaven,* ***having made peace through the blood of His cross.*** *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.*
(Colossians 1:19-22, emphasis added)

When God created the first man, He established a relationship of love and trust between Himself and Adam. This was the beginning of all human relationships with the Creator. God also formed the first woman, Eve, and established a relationship with both of them. Since that time, the lives of all the great believers in the Bible have demonstrated that God desires a personal relationship with human beings. We see this truth played out in the lives of Abraham, Noah, Moses, Peter, Paul, and many others.

Tragically, however, the Creator's deep closeness and unity with humanity was broken when Adam and Eve turned their backs on God and chose rebellion rather than relationship. A wall was created between the heavenly Father and His created offspring. This separation was symbolized by the curtain, or veil, in the tabernacle and temple, which we have discussed.

In my visions, I have often seen what looked like a literal barrier that sin has created between God and man. This barrier represents man's basic hostility toward God. The Scripture tells us, *"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Romans 8:7-8). Yet Christ's blood has the power, through forgiveness, to bring together God and man, and man and man.

PEACE WITH GOD

Colossians 1:20 says that Jesus *"made peace through the blood of His cross."* Jesus' blood has such marvelous power that, through it, we have a *"new and living way"* (Hebrews 10:20) into the presence of God and into peace with God. What does this peace through the blood mean for us?

Our Enmity against God Is Dissolved

First, we no longer need to be at enmity with God. People are often either hostile to God or trying to ignore Him because their unresolved guilt brings out feelings of self- preservation and causes them to resent Him. They fear punishment, so they run from His presence. Yet Christ has paid the penalty that we deserved, so there's nothing that we have to "protect" ourselves against in God's presence. In fact, the Bible says that we can go boldly into God's presence and ask for help in time of need. (See Hebrews 4:16.)

Our Close Fellowship with God is Restored

Second, the blood has the power to bring us back into deep fellowship with God. We can have intimate communion with Him, just as He intended for us to have. *"In Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"* (Ephesians 2:13). By the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice, the sons and daughters of God may receive personal peace and the restitution of their relationship with their heavenly Father.

When we are cleansed by the blood of the cross, God reaches out and pulls us close to Him. You are wanted by Him! He desired you to be His child when you were still in your mother's womb. This was the main reason for the cross—to reconcile us with our heavenly Father. *"We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation"* (Romans 5:11).

As a child of God, you may be rejected by your family, friends, and others, but you are not—and you never will be—rejected by your heavenly Father. Not only did Christ our High Priest declare you cleansed and forgiven, not only does the Judge of the universe declare you righteous, but He also declares that you are His friend. (See John 15:15.) He is a Friend who will walk and talk with you and who will

be with you in times of trouble. When you begin to understand the depths of God’s love for you, you will develop a sweet fellowship with Him. Imagine, we can actually be friends—kindred spirits, soul mates—of the Almighty!

God's Peace Guards Our hearts and minds

Third, through the blood of Christ, we experience a peace that keeps us calm and moving forward during difficult times. Jesus told His disciples just before His crucifixion, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). The apostle Paul encouraged the believers with this thought:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7)

THE LORD'S SUPPER REPRESENTS OUR PEACE WITH GOD

Our peace with God is reflected whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, and we may use this occasion to deepen our communion with Him. This is because the celebration of the Lord's Supper is a vital part of every Christian's relationship with God. Our observance of this sacrament forever reminds us in a personal way of the price that was paid for our salvation. It is also an act of personal obedience and testimony.

When Jesus inaugurated the Lord's Supper, He gave specific instructions for it:

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

Someone has called the Lord's Supper a "progressive dinner party." Each time we participate in the service, we are reminded that it is just another session of the same meal that began in the Upper Room when Jesus first broke bread with His disciples in this way. It has continued throughout time since then, reminding us of His death on our behalf.

This practice was assigned to the church so that we would regularly and perpetually remind ourselves of the blood that Jesus shed at Calvary. The breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup constantly refreshes in us the memory and personal importance of His body and blood.

But this fellowship meal also looks forward. It commemorates Jesus' death *"till He comes"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). In a marvelous way, it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb of God in eternity. It spiritually unites us with all the saints of the past, present, and future.

The bread that we partake of in this sacrament represents the incarnation of the Bread of Life. The incarnation was God Himself, in Jesus, taking on a fleshly body, living among men, and offering His body in sacrifice for them. The cup, or the wine, represents the shedding of Jesus' blood as the means of God's establishing a new

covenant with His people.

Through God's revelations to me concerning the blood, I have come to understand that it is the consistent and perpetual sharing of the bread and the cup that keeps our hearts and minds refreshed in the salvation provided for us by Jesus at Calvary. No other body or blood could make such a sacrifice. No other man or woman could claim such perfection as a spotless lamb before God. In every instance in which we partake of the bread and cup, we are saying to God, "I deserved to die, but I acknowledge the fact that Jesus took my place!"

Lest the sacrifice that Jesus made somehow be forgotten, and we begin to rest in the benefits of salvation without remembering its terrible price, we are to remind ourselves of the body of Jesus that was torn, battered, and pierced for us. We are to remember each tear in His flesh, each stripe in His back, and each time He was pierced as He provided our peace with God. The bread recounts for us these sufferings He bore in His body—sufferings that were rightfully ours, but which He willingly bore in our stead.

The same holds true for the cup. When we drink of the cup, we are to remind ourselves of the blood Jesus shed in Herod's palace, in Pilate's hall, and on Calvary's brow.

Oh, my friend, every time you drink the cup in the Lord's Supper, you should remind yourself of His blood. It was His blood instead of yours. His blood paid the price that made it possible for you to be forgiven. Forgiveness requires us to remember His blood and accept it as the only atoning sacrifice for our sins.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

The Lord's Supper is also a reminder of the peace and communion we have with others through Christ.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? (1 Corinthians 10:16-18)

The foundation of our peace with others is our having made peace with God through the blood of the cross. This reconciliation with God puts us in relationship with Him and enables us to live in peace, which is a fruit of His Spirit. Since God is our Father, all believers belong to the same family. Moreover, since all human beings are made in the image of God, we are to treat them with respect. *"And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also"* (1 John 4:21).

Underlying Cain's murder of his brother, Abel, was that he did not want to acknowledge his responsibility for loving and caring for his brother. *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Genesis 4:9) Cain asked defensively after he went out and killed him. In contrast, Christ came to earth as our Elder Brother and laid down His life for us to demonstrate how we are to love and treat others. John wrote,

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

When we walk in the light, or truth, of our salvation, we can have fellowship with those around us. As we do this, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all sin.

Not only does the power of the blood apply to the personal realm of peacemaking, but it also extends to peace between people groups and nations. The blood of Jesus has the power to unite people of every race, culture, and ethnicity. It makes them a new people—the covenant people of God.

One of the truly remarkable scenes in heaven will be the throng, made up of people from all over the world, that will assemble before the throne of God:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10)

Those who—on a natural plane—lived an existence characterized by deadly enmity before they made peace with their enemies through Christ demonstrate the truth that "[God] *has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth"* (Acts 17:26). This is not only a physical reality, but also a spiritual one that the evil of the world has impeded through the centuries. However, this reality of peaceful unity is fulfilled anew by the power of the blood of the Lamb.

Conflict between races and nationalities has existed since the beginning of history. It is easy to divide and bring enmity between people, but only the blood of the precious Lamb of God has the power to make peace and bring them together permanently. Paul was writing about the age-old conflict between Jews and Gentiles when he said,

[Jesus] *Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.* (Ephesians 2:14-16)

The gospel has had from its outset the stated goal of unifying people of all races and nationalities before God, and it is the blood of Christ that brings us together. There are countless brothers and sisters all over the world who come together and regularly celebrate in communion the memory of the blood of Christ, and we are united with them.

Men have forever tried through force of arms to unite different peoples into empires, but they have always ultimately failed. Yet the kingdom of Christ has lasted two thousand years because of the power of His blood.

His blood has transformed whole peoples. Visitors today can go to lands once dominated by cannibalism and heathen practices and find people living harmoniously because of the influence of the gospel. History records the account of a shipwrecked people who survived

unknown for decades on a lonely island in the Pacific Ocean. When discovered, it was revealed that they had decided to be governed by the principles of the New Testament they had carried ashore from the wreck of their ship. The result was a peaceable, happy, well-adjusted, wonderfully functioning community. Heaven will tell the stories of countless tribes and nations transformed by the power of the blood.

THE PEACE OF FORGIVENESS

Another vital aspect of our peace through the blood of Christ is the presence of forgiveness in our lives—God's forgiveness of us, and the forgiveness we give and receive from other human beings.

Christ shed His blood so that God could forgive us for every sin we ever committed, and through His blood, He is able to forgive us if we sin now. He has not only provided for our forgiveness at salvation, but also for our ongoing forgiveness: *"If we walk in the light as He is in the light,...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). There is no sin, no wrong, no crime that the blood of Jesus cannot remove. This truth can comfort us whenever we agonize over our own sins and seek God's cleansing anew.

The blood of Jesus also provides us with the power to forgive others as we become conformed to the image of Christ. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed for those who had crucified Him: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34). The power of forgiveness and right relationships is in the blood of the Lamb. The Scripture says, *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men"* (Romans 12:18).

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE—A GOSPEL OF RECONCILIATION

Finally, the blood of Christ gives us the ministry of reconciliation. As we have been forgiven and restored to God, we are to seek to bring others to Him for atonement and restoration, also. *"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).*

Hoofstuk 8: Vrede deur die bloed

"...die straf wat vir ons die vrede aanbring, was op Hom... - Jesaja 53:5

Vrede is nog 'n iets wat ons ontvang as ons die bloed van Christus in ons lewens toepas:
"Want dit het die Vader behaag dat in Hom die ganse volheid sou woon en dat Hy deur Hom ***alles met Homself sou versoen nadat Hy vrede gemaak het deur die bloed van Sy kruis*** *- ek sê deur Hom - die dinge op die aarde sowel as die dinge in die hemele. Ook julle wat vroeër vervreemd was en vyandig gesind deur die bose werke, het Hy nou versoen in die liggaam van Sy vlees deur die dood, om julle heilig en sonder gebrek en onberispelik voor Hom te stel"* (Kolossense 1:19-22, klem bygevoeg).
Toe God die eerste mens geskape het, het Hy 'n verhouding van liefde en vertroue tussen Homself en Adam gevestig. Dit was die begin van die mens se verhouding met sy Skepper. God het ook die eerste vrou, Eva, geskape en 'n verhouding met hulle twee gevestig. Sedert daardie tyd sien ons in die lewens van alle groot gelowiges in die Bybel dat die Here graag 'n persoonlike verhouding met mense wil hê. Ons sien byvoorbeeld dié waarheid in die lewens van Abraham, Noag, Moses, Petrus en Paulus - om maar net 'n paar te noem.

Die Skepper se gemeenskap met Sy kinders is egter op tragiese wyse verbreek toe Adam en Eva hulle rue op Hom gekeer en in opstand teen Hom gekom het. Daardeur het hulle 'n muur tussen God en Sy skepsels gebou. Hierdie skeiding is deur die voorhangsel in die tabernakel en tempel gesimboliseer.

In my visioene het ek al dikwels iets gesien wat soos 'n versperring lyk - iets wat deur die sonde tussen God en mens opgerig is. Hierdie versperring verteenwoordig die mens se vyandigheid teenoor God. Die Skrif sê vir ons: *"...omdat wat die vlees bedink, vyandskap teen God is; want dit onderwerp hom nie aan die wet van God nie, want dit kan ook nie. En die wat in die vlees is, kan God nie behaag nie"* (Romeine 8:7-8). Maar Christus se bloed het die krag om, deur vergifnis, vir God en mens en ook vir mens en mens, weer bymekaar te bring.

VREDE MET GOD

Kolossense 1:20 sê dat Jesus "vrede gemaak het deur die bloed van Sy kruis." Jesus se bloed is só kragtig dat ons daardeur *"'n nuwe en lewende weg"* het (Hebreërs 10:20) tot in die teenwoordigheid van God en ook tot in Sy vrede. Ons kan in vrede met God leef. Maar wat beteken dit vir ons?

ONS VYANDSKAP TEEN GOD IS BEËINDIG

In die eerste plek is ons nie meer vyande van God nie. 'n Mens vind dikwels dat mense Hom vyandiggesind is om- dat hulle skuldgevoelens het as gevolg van sonde in hulle lewens. Hulle is bang vir sy straf en daarom vlug hulle van Hom af weg. Maar Christus het die prys betaal, daarom hoef ons onself nie meer teen God te "beskerm" nie. Die Bybel sê trouens dat ons met vrymoedigheid in God se teenwoordigheid kan ingaan en Hom in tye van nood om hulp kan vra (verwys Hebreërs 4:16).

ONS GEMEENSKAP MET GOD IS HERSTEL

In die tweede plek kan die bloed van Christus ons gemeenskap met God herstel. Ons kan weer daardie intieme ver- houding met Hom hê, net soos wat Hy die verhouding oor- spronklik gevestig het. "*Maar nou in Christus Jesus het julle wat vroeër ver was, naby gekom deur die bloed van Christus"* (Efésiërs 2:13). Deur die effektiwiteit van Jesus se offer, kan die seuns en dogters van God vrede ervaar en kan hulle verhouding met hulle hemelse Vader herstel word.

As ons deur die bloed van die kruis gereinig word, trek God ons weer na Hom toe. Ja, Hy wil jou naby Hom hê! Hy wou jou as Sy kind gehad het toe jy nog in jou ma se baar- moeder was. Dit was die hoofrede vir die kruis - om ons met ons hemelse Vader te versoen. *"...ons roem ook in God deur onse Here Jesus Christus, deur wie ons nou die versoening verkry het"* (Romeine 5:11).

Jy word dalk as kind van God deur jou eie familie, deur vriende en ander verwerp. Maar jy sal nooit, ooit deur jou hemelse Vader verwerp word nie. Nie net het Christus, ons Hoëpriester, gesê dat jy vergewe en gereinig is nie en nie net het die Regter van die heelal gesê dat jy regverdig is nie, maar Hy sê ook nog dat jy Sy vriend is (verwys Johannes 15:15). Hy is 'n Vriend wat in moeilike tye by jou sal bly en met jou sal praat as dit swaar gaan. As jy begin om die diepte van God se liefde vir jou te verstaan, sal jy 'n wonderlike gemeenskap met Hom ontwikkel. Stel jou voor - ons kan inderdaad vriende, sielsgenote van die Almagtige wees!

GOD SE VREDE BEWAAK ONS HART EN VERSTAND

In die derde plek ervaar ons deur die bloed van Christus 'n vrede wat ons kalm hou te midde van moeilike tye. Jesus het net voor Sy

kruisiging vir sy dissipels gesê: "*Vrede laat Ek vir julle na, my vrede gee Ek aan julle; nie soos die wêreld gee, gee Ek aan julle nie. Laat julle hart nie ontsteld word en bang wees nie*" (Johannes 14:27). Die apostel Paulus het gelowiges só bemoedig:

"Wees oor niks besorg nie, maar laat julle begeertes in alles deur gebed en smeking met danksegging bekend word by God. En die vrede van God, wat alle verstand te bowe gaan, sal julle harte en julle sinne bewaar in Christus Jesus" (Filippense 4:6-7).

DIE NAGMAAL VERTEENWOORDIG ONS VREDE MET GOD

Ons vrede met God word geopenbaar elke keer as ons deel het aan die Nagmaal. Ons kan ook dié geleentheid gebruik om ons gemeenskap met Hom te verdiep. Dit is só omdat die Nagmaal 'n integrale deel is van elke gelowige se ver- houding met God. Die gebruik van hierdie sakrament herinner ons altyd op 'n baie persoonlike manier aan die prys wat betaal is vir ons verlossing. Dit is ook 'n daad van gehoorsaamheid én dit is 'n getuienis.

Toe Jesus die Nagmaal ingestel het, het Hy bepaalde opdragte daaroor gegee:

"Daarop neem Hy brood, en nadat Hy gedank het, breek Hy dit en gee dit aan hulle en sê: Dit is My liggaam wat vir julle gegee word; doen dit tot My gedagtenis. Net so neem Hy ook die beker ná die maaltyd en sê: Hierdie beker is die nuwe testament in My bloed wat vir julle uitgestort word" (Lukas 22:19-20).

Elke keer wat ons deel het aan die Nagmaal, word ons daaraan herinner dat ons deel het aan die maaltyd wat Jesus en Sy dissipels daardie aand in die bo-vertrek geëet het. En só word ons ook herinner aan Sy dood ter wille van ons.

Hierdie gebruik is aan die kerk toegesê sodat ons gereeld herinner sou word aan die bloed wat Jesus op Golgota gestort het. Die breek van die brood en die drink van die wyn versterk die herinnering aan en die belangrikheid van Sy liggaam en Sy bloed vir ons.

Maar dié maaltyd is ook 'n heenwysing na die toekoms. Dit herdenk Jesus se dood *"totdat Hy kom"* (1 Korinthiërs 11:26). Op 'n wonderlike wyse is dit 'n heenwysing na die bruilofsfees van die Lam van God in die ewigheid. Dit verenig ons op 'n geestelike manier met al die gelowiges van die verlede, hede én die toekoms.

Die brood wat ons tydens die Nagmaal eet, dui op die Brood van die Lewe. Dit was God self, in Jesus, wat mens geword en in die liggaam van 'n mens onder die mense kom woon en Sy liggaam as offer vir hulle gegee het. Die beker en die wyn verteenwoordig die stort van Jesus se bloed as die wyse waarop God 'n nuwe verbond met Sy kinders tot stand gebring het.

Deur God se openbarings oor die bloed aan my, het ek begin verstaan dat dit die herhaaldelike gebruik van die brood en die beker is wat die herinnering aan Jesus se ver- lossingswerk op Golgota vars in ons gemoedere hou. Geen ander liggaam of bloed kon so 'n offer bring nie. Geen ander man of vrou kon daarop aanspraak maak dat hy of sy vlekkeloos en sonder gebrek voor God kon staan nie. Elke keer as ons deel het aan die brood en die beker, sê ons vir God: "Ek verdien om te sterf, maar ek erken dat Jesus my plek ingeneem het."

Die Nagmaal herinner ons weer daaraan dat Jesus se liggaam stukkend geslaan was - net ingeval ons dit dalk sou vergeet en die voordele van ons verlossing as vanselfsprekend sou begin aanvaar. Ons moet elke wond aan Sy liggaam onthou, elke wond wat Hy moes verduur sodat óns vrede met God kan hê. Die brood vertel vir ons van die ly- ding wat Hy na die liggaam moes verduur - lyding wat Hy in óns plek verduur het.

Dieselfde geld vir die beker. Elke keer wat ons daaruit drink, moet ons dink aan die bloed wat Jesus in Herodes se paleis, in Pilatus se woning en op Golgota gestort het.

Liewe Leser, elke keer as jy uit die beker drink, moet jy aan Sy bloed dink. Dit was Sy bloed in plaas van joune. Sy bloed het die prys betaal sodat jy vergewe kon word. Ons vergifnis vereis dat ons Sy bloed sal onthou en sal weet dat dit die enigste soenoffer vir ons sondes is.

VREDE MET ANDER

Die Nagmaal herinner jou ook daaraan dat jy deur Christus vrede en gemeenskap met ander kan hê.

"...die beker van danksegging wat ons met danksegging seën, is dit nie die gemeenskap met die bloed van Christus nie? Die brood wat ons breek, is dit nie die gemeenskap met die liggaam van Christus nie? Omdat dit een brood is, is ons almal een liggaam, want ons het almal deel aan die een brood. Let op Israel na die vlees: het die wat die offers eet, nie gemeenskap met die altaar nie?" (1 Korinthiërs 10:16-18).

Die fondament van ons vrede met ander mense lê daarin dat ons vrede met God sal hê deur die bloed van die kruis. Hierdie versoening met God stel ons in 'n bepaalde ver- houding met Hom en maak dit vir ons moontlik om in vrede met ander te lewe. Vrede is dan ook 'n vrug van Sy Gees. Aangesien God ons Vader is, behoort alle gelowiges aan dieselfde familie. En omdat alle mense na die beeld van God geskape is, behoort ons alle mense met respek te behandel. "*En hierdie gebod het ons van Hom dat hy wat God liefhet, ook sy broeder moet liefhê"* (1 Johannes 4:21).

Kain se moord op sy broer Abel kan deels toegeskryf word aan die feit dat hy nie wou aanvaar dat hy sy broer moes liefhê en vir hom

moes sorg nie. *"Is ek my broer se wagter?"* (Génesis 4:9) het hy vir die Here gevra nadat hy sy broer vermoor het. In skerp teenstelling daarmee het Jesus as ons ouer Broer na die wêreld toe gekom en Sy lewe vir ons afgelê om vir ons te wys hoe ons ander moet liefhê en behandel. Johannes skryf:

"Maar as ons in die lig wandel soos Hy in die lig is, dan het ons gemeenskap met mekaar; en die bloed van Jesus Christus, Sy Seun, reinig ons van alle sonde" (1 Johannes 1:7).

As ons in die lig of die waarheid van ons verlossing lewe, kan ons gemeenskap hê met die mense óm ons. Dan sal die bloed van Jesus ons van alle sonde reinig.

Die krag van die bloed is nie net van toepassing as dit kom by vrede maak tussen individue nie, maar ook as dit kom by vrede tussen groepe en volke. Die bloed van Jesus het die krag om elke ras, kultuur en etniese groep wat daar is, te verenig. Dit maak van hulle 'n nuwe groep - die ver bondsvolk van God.

Een van die merkwaardigste tonele in die hemel sal die groot skare wees wat voor die troon van God byeen sal kom:

"Na hierdie dinge het ek gesien, en kyk, daar was 'n groot menigte wat niemand kon tel nie, uit alle nasies en stamme en volke en tale; hulle het gestaan voor die troon en voor die Lam, bekleed met wit klere en met palmtakke in hulle hande; en hulle het met 'n groot stem geroep en gesê: Heil aan onse God wat op die troon sit, en aan die Lam!" (Openbaring 7:9-10).

Mense wat natuurlike vyande was en deur Christus uiteindelik vrede gemaak het, demonstreer die waarheid dat God *"uit een bloed al die nasies van die mensdom gemaak (het) om oor die hele aarde te woon"* (Handelinge 17:26). Dit is nie net 'n fisieke realiteit nie, maar ook 'n geestelike een dat die boosheid in die wêreld deur die eeue heen alles binnegedring het. Maar hierdie realiteit van vrede en eenheid word opnuut deur die krag van die Lam se bloed vervul.

Konflik tussen rasse en nasionaliteite bestaan reeds sedert die begin van die mens se geskiedenis. Dit is maklik om mense en volkere te skei en tweedrag te saai, maar slegs die bloed van die kosbare Lam van God het die krag om vrede te maak en hulle permanent saam te voeg. Paulus skryf oor die eeue-oue konflik tussen Jode en nie-Jode waar hy sê:

"Want Hy (Jesus) is ons vrede, Hy wat albei een gemaak en die middelmuur van skeiding afgebreek het deurdat Hy in sy vlees die vyandskap tot niet gemaak het, naamlik die wet van gebooie wat in insettinge bestaan; sodat Hy, deur vrede te maak, die twee in Homself tot een nuwe mens kon skep en albei in een liggaam met God kon versoen deur die kruis, nadat Hy daaraan die vyandskap doodgemaak het" (Efésiërs 2:14-16).

Die evangelie sê reg van die begin af reeds dat dit ten doel het om mense van alle rasse en nasionaliteite voor God te verenig en dit is die bloed van Christus wat ons bymekaar bring. Daar is talle broers en susters dwarsoor die wêreld wat gereeld saam Nagmaal vier en die bloed van Christus herdenk en ons is met hulle verenig.

Mense het nog altyd probeer om deur geweld eenheid tussen mense en koninkryke te probeer bring - maar hulle het nog altyd gefaal. En tog sien ons dat die koninkryk van Christus danksy die krag van Sy bloed reeds tweeduisend jaar bestaan.

Sy bloed het volke ingrypend verander. Besoekers kan vandag na lande toe gaan wat vroeër gekenmerk is deur kannibalisme en heidense gebruike en hulle sal sien dat die mense in vrede en harmonie leef danksy die invloed van die evangelie. Daar word vertel van mense wat dekades lank op 'n eensame eiland in die Stille Oseaan oorleef het nadat hulle skip vergaan het. Toe hulle uiteindelik ontdek is, is daar gevind dat hulle geleef het volgens die beginsels van die Nuwe Testament wat hulle saam met hulle van die skeepswrak af gebring het. Die gevolg was dat hulle 'n rustige, gelukkige, goed-aangepaste gemeenskap was. Só is daar talle verhale van stamme en nasies wat deur die krag van die bloed getransformeer is.

DIE VREDE VAN VERGIFNIS

Nog 'n kernaspek van ons vrede deur die bloed van Christus, is die aanwesigheid van vergifnis in ons lewens. Nie net God se vergifnis van ons nie, maar ook die vergifnis wat ons vir mekaar gee en van mekaar ontvang.

Christus het Sy bloed gestort sodat God elke sonde wat ons nog ooit gedoen het, sou vergewe - en deur Sy bloed kan Hy ons steeds vergewe as ons nou sondig. Hy het nie net voorsiening gemaak vir ons vergifnis met ons aanvanklike verlossing nie. Nee, dit is 'n aaneenlopende proses van vergifnis: *"Maar as ons in die lig wandel soos Hy in die lig is ... en die bloed van Jesus Christus, sy Seun, reinig ons van alle sonde"* (1 Johannes 1:7). Daar is geen sonde, geen oortreding, geen misdaad wat die bloed van Jesus nié kan weg- neem nie. Hierdie waarheid kan ons troos elke keer as ons met die gedagte aan ons sondes worstel en opnuut na God se reiniging smag.

Die bloed van Jesus stel ons ook in staat om ander te vergewe namate ons meer en meer aan die beeld van Christus gelyk word. Toe Jesus aan die kruis gehang het, het Hy vir dié wat Hom gekruisig het, gebid: *"Vader, vergeef hulle, want hulle weet nie wat hulle doen nie"* (Lukas 23:34). Die krag van vergifnis en die regte verhouding lê in die bloed van die Lam. Die Skrif sê: *"...as dit moontlik is, sover as dit van julle afhang, leef in vrede met alle mense"* (Romeine 12:18).

DIE EVANGELIE VAN VREDE - 'n EVANGELIE VAN VERSOENING

In die laaste instansie gee die bloed van Christus vir ons die bediening van versoening. Soos wat ons vergewe is en met God versoen is, so moet ons ook daarna streef om ander *vir* versoening na Hom toe te lei. *"En dit alles is uit God wat ons met Homself versoen het deur Jesus Christus en ons die bediéning van die versoening gegee het"* (2 Korinthiërs 5:18).

Chapter 9: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE BLOOD

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

—2 Corinthians 3:18

A third aspect of the application of the blood of Jesus in our lives is that it provides for our spiritual transformation into the image of Christ. As the Bible puts it, "*For by one offering He **has perfected forever** those who are **being sanctified**"* (Hebrews 10:14, emphasis added). Although we have been redeemed, we are also *"being transformed… from glory to glory"* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We are not to simply rest upon the benefits of our first encounter with Christ's blood but are to reflect the changed life that is the promise of our salvation. Being born again is just the beginning.

Overcoming Power

The blood of Jesus was shed for the remission of all your sins. It is also the agent that gives you the ability and power to overcome challenges and temptations. When things start going wrong in our lives, many of us either have a pity party or start condemning and accusing ourselves, saying such things as “Why does everything always happen to me?” or “Why do I always mess up?” Sometimes, we feel this way because the accuser of the brethren is harassing us. (See Revelation 12:10.) He whispers in our thoughts, “If you were *really* a Christian, you wouldn’t have done that.”

When this happens to you, you can rejoice because you have already been promised overcoming power. The accuser can be defeated because the blood of Jesus will cause you to triumph. Satan will come to tell you that you have failed and are no good. However, you can appropriate what God has given you to remove anything within you that is not godly and replace it with the nature of Christ.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, ***much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*** *And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

(Romans 5:9-11, emphasis added)

Daily Cleansing

One thing God has given us is the ability to receive daily cleansing of our sins, as well as attitudes that are contrary to His thoughts and ways. With the temptations of this world, we are susceptible to wandering, even sliding away from, the commitment we have made to Christ. That is why we need a daily cleansing in His blood. What a wonderful thought that the blood of Jesus cleanses us, even now, from all sin!

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, ***cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?***

(Hebrews 9:13-14, emphasis added)

The great comfort to the believer in his daily walk is the present and continuous cleansing of the blood. Each day, ask Jesus to cleanse you afresh through His blood so that you can serve the living God.

Second, while the sacrificial system is no longer needed, we can still learn spiritual truths from its practices. As we come before the Lord in confession, forgiveness, worship, and intercession, we should remember the spirit behind some of the regulations that the Israelites followed. Here are a few examples:

[1]. Recall that the Hebrews sacrificed a burnt offering every morning and evening. These offerings were not just for propitiation (forgiveness), but also for wholehearted consecration to God, which we will talk more about shortly. As you pray, regularly rededicate yourself to your heavenly Father and His purposes, and rejoice in His presence.

2. Remember that the guilt offering was for the purpose of reconciliation between man and God and man and man. Jesus spoke to this idea when He taught, *“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24). As you pray, if you remember that you are not in right relationship with someone, seek God’s forgiveness and then seek to mend the relationship. If applicable, offer restitution.

3. The sin offering was given by those who had committed sin without realizing at the time that what they had done was wrong. David may have been thinking of this concept when he prayed, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23-24). We can pray the same prayer and know that the blood of Christ eternally cleanses from all sin. "[Jesus] *bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness”* (1 Peter 2:24).

TRIUMPHING OVER SIN AND TEMPTATION

Jesus' atoning death has removed sin's defilement and annulled sin's power. By bearing the punishment of sin even unto death, Jesus conquered the power of sin, robbed the enemy of his spoils, and made it possible for believers to experience the power of a godly life. Faith in His blood gives us divine life so that we can triumph over sin in our daily living. His blood removes our sin from God's sight and, again, cleanses our consciences from *"dead works"* (Hebrews 9:14).

Consecrating Our Lives to God

God has purposes for us in this world, and He desires to remove everything that would prevent our commitment to them. In Leviticus 8, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to their work as priests. After the ram of consecration was sacrificed, Moses sprinkled its blood on the altar and put some of the blood on the tips of the priests' right ears and on their right thumbs and toes. This rite signified the consecration of their whole lives to God's service. Let's adapt this symbolism for the consecration of our own lives to Him:

- The ear represents what we hear.

All that we listen to—radio, television, CDs, DVDs, conversations—everything that enters our minds must be filtered through the precious blood of the Lamb.

- The thumb represents every work and skill we are capable of doing. It represents our acts. Everything we do should be done for God's glory and in the strength of Christ.
- The toe represents where we go. It stands for our purposes and plans as well as our daily walk with the Lord. Everywhere we go, we need to reflect the nature and purposes of God, which we have received through the blood of the Lamb.

Let's talk about another powerful member of the body—the tongue. When we ask for the covering of Christ's blood on our tongues, our speech, and our words, we are asking God to guard us against using our words for evil, lies, anger, gossip, and those idle words we are prone to speak. Jesus said,

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
(Matthew 12:36-37)

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote the following:

See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell....But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:5-6, 8)

And the apostle Paul warned, "[Let us not] *complain, as some of* [the

Israelites in the desert] *also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer"* (1 Corinthians 10:10).

As we surrender to Christ's power within us by His blood, we have the ability to take an unruly tongue and make it an altar of praise and gratitude. *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15).

What we see, also, needs to be screened in light of the blood of Jesus Christ. This includes television, the Internet, magazines, videos, DVDs, movies, and books. Any pastime or pursuit that can turn our minds away from Christ's purposes and ways must be avoided. In Job 31:3, we read that Job made a covenant with his eyes so that he would do what was right in the sight of God. (See Job 31:1, 7-8.)

COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMATION

When we commit to being transformed into the image of Christ, we are fulfilling much of the purpose of the redeeming blood of Jesus. We were purchased for God so that we may love and serve Him as Christ did. When the Israelites of Moses' day sacrificed the sin offering,

> the burning of the fat of the sacrifice upon the altar as...a soothing aroma unto Jehovah (Lev. 4:31) was symbolic of the handing over of the better part of the man, the part that is susceptible of renewal, to the purifying fire of the divine holiness and love, in order that the inward man might be renewed from day to day by the Spirit of the Lord and at length be changed into the glory of the children of God.[1]

In a similar way, we can hand over our lives to God in order to experience the purifying and renewing of His holiness and love. In this way, our lives, also, will reflect the glory of God through the blood of the Lamb.

Hoofstuk 9: Die betekenis van die bloed

"'En terwyl ons almal met onbedekte gesig soos in 'n spieël die heerlikheid van die Here aanskou, word ons van gedaante verander na dieselfde beeld, van heerlikheid tot heerlikheid, as deur die Here wat die Gees is."
- 2 Korinthiërs 3:18

'n Derde aspek van die toepassing van die bloed van Jesus in ons lewens, is dat dit ons geestelik verander en meer na die beeld van Christus omvorm. Die Bybel stel dit só: *"Want deur een offer het Hy **vir altyd volmaak** die **wat geheilig word"*** (Hebreërs 10:14, klem bygevoeg). Hoewel ons dus verlos is, word ons ook *"verander ... van heerlikheid na heerlikheid"* (2 Korinthiërs 3:18).

Ons moenie net rustig die voordele van ons eerste kennismaking met Christus se bloed aanvaar sonder om enigiets verder te doen nie, maar moet ook nadink oor die veranderde lewe wat die belofte van ons verlossing is. Om wedergebore te wees, is maar net die begin.

OORWINNINGSKRAG

Die bloed van Jesus is gestort vir die verlossing van al jou sondes. Dit maak dit ook vir jou moontlik om uitdagings en versoekings te bowe te kom. Wanneer dinge in mense se lewens verkeerd begin loop, gee baie hulleself oor aan self- bejammering, terwyl ander hulleself weer veroordeel en dinge sê soos: "Hoekom maak ek altyd 'n gemors van

alles!" Ons voel partykeer so omdat die beskuldiger en ander mense ons van allerhande dinge beskuldig (verwys Openbaring 12:10). Hy fluister in ons gedagtes: "As *jy regtig* 'n Christen was, sou jy dit nie gedoen het nie."

As so iets met jou gebeur, kan jy bly wees, want jy kan weet dat jy reeds oorwinningskrag ontvang het. Die beskuldiger kán oorwin word. Want die bloed van Jesus sal jou laat triomfeer. Die Satan sal vir jou kom vertel dat jy niks beteken nie. Maar jy kan aanspraak maak op wat God jou gee om alles wat binne-in jou is en wat nie goddelik is nie, weg te neem en met die natuur van Christus te vervang.

*"Veel meer dan sal ons, nou dat ons geregverdig is in Sy bloed, deur Hom gered word van die toorn. Want as ons, terwyl ons nog vyande was, met God versoen is deur die dood van sy Seun, **veel meer sal ons deur Sy lewe gered word nou dat ons versoen is.** En nie alleen dit nie, maar ons roem ook in God deur onse Here Jesus Christus, deur wie ons nou die versoening verkry het"* (Romeine 5:9-11).

DAAGLIKSE REINIGING

God maak dit vir ons moontlik om elke dag van ons sondes, asook van gesindhede wat strydig is met Sy gedagtes en Sy weë, gereinig te word. Met die talle versoekings wat hierdie wêreld bied, is dit baie maklik om in jou toewyding aan Christus te verslap en van Hom af te dwaal. Dit is waarom ons elke dag in Sy bloed gewas moet word. Watter wonderlike gedagte is dit dat die bloed van Jesus ons nog steeds van alle sonde reinig!

*"Want as die bloed van stiere en bokke en die as van 'n vers wat die verontreinigdes besprinkel, heilig maak tot reiniging van die vlees, hoeveel te meer sal die bloed van Christus, wat Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer het, **julle gewete reinig van dooie werke om die lewende God te dien"*** **(Hebreërs 9:13-14).**

Dit is geweldig bemoedigend vir die gelowige om te weet dat hy daagliks die reinigingskrag van die bloed tot sy beskikking het. Vra Jesus elke dag om jou opnuut deur sy bloed te reinig sodat jy die lewende God kan dien.

DAAGLIKSE GEBED, BELYDENIS EN AANBIDDING

Hoewel die offerstelsel van die Ou Testament nie meer in gebruik is nie, kan ons nog baie daaruit leer. Wanneer ons ons sondes voor God bely, Hom om vergifnis vra, Hom aanbid en by Hom intree, is dit goed om te onthou wat die gees agter sommige van die opdragte is wat Hy ten opsigte van die ou offerstelsel gegee het. Hier is 'n paar voorbeelde:

1. Onthou, die Hebreërs het elke oggend en aand 'n brandoffer gebring. Hierdie offers was nie net vir vergifnis nie, maar ook om te

bevestig dat hulle hulleself volkome aan God gewy het - ons kom netnou daarby. Wanneer jy bid, moet jy jouself gereeld opnuut aan God en aan Sy doel met jou wy en vreugde vind in Sy teenwoordigheid.

2. Onthou dat die skuldoffer gebring is om die mens met God te versoen en ook versoening tussen mense te bewerkstellig. Jesus verwys hierna waar Hy sê: "As *jy dan jou gawe na die altaar bring en dit jou daar byval dat jou broeder iets teen jou het, laat jou "gawe daar voor die altaar bly en gaan ver- soen jou eers met jou broeder, en kom dan en bring jou gawe*" (Matthéus 5:23-24). Wanneer jy bid, moet jy ook vir die Here vra om jou te vergewe as jy nie 'n gesonde verhouding met iemand anders het nie - en dan moet jy gaan probeer om daardie verhouding reg te stel. As dit nodig is, moet jy ook aanbied om skadevergoeding te betaal.

3. Die sonde-offer is gebring deur diegene wat sonde gedoen het sonder dat hulle dit besef het. Dit is dalk waaraan Dawid gedink het toe hy gebid het: "*Deur- grond my, o God, en ken my hart; toets my en ken my gedagtes; en kyk of daar by my 'n weg is van smart, en lei my op die ewige weg!" (Psalm 139:23-24). Ons kan dieselfde gebed bid en weet dat die bloed van Jesus tot in ewigheid van alle sonde reinig. "(Jesus) wat self ons sondes in Sy liggaam op die kruishout gedra het, sodat ons die sondes kan afsterwe en vir die geregtigheid lewe; deur wie se wonde julle genees is" (1 Petrus 2:24).*

OORWINNING OOR DIE SONDE EN VERSOEKING

Jesus se soendood het die sonde se smet en krag uitgewis. Deurdat Hy die straf van die sonde deur Sy dood op Hom geneem het, het Hy die krag van die sonde oorwin en het Hy die vyand van sy oorwinning ontneem en dit vir gelowiges moontlik gemaak om die krag van 'n goddelike lewe te ervaar. Geloof in Sy bloed gee vir ons 'n goddelike lewe sodat ons in ons daaglikse lewe oor die sonde kan triomfeer. Sy bloed neem die sonde weg voor God se oë en reinig ons gewetes van *"dooie werke"* (Hebreërs 9:14).

WY JOU LEWE AAN GOD

God het 'n doel met jou hier op aarde en Hy wil alles wat jou verhinder om jou aan daardie doel toe te wy, uit jou hart en lewe verwyder. In Levítikus 8 sien ons dat Aáron en sy seuns aan hulle werk as priesters gewy is. Nadat die wydingsram geoffer is, het Moses sy bloed op die altaar gesprinkel en daarna van die bloed aan die priesters se regterore, regter- duime en tone gesmeer. Hierdie ritueel was die simbool dat hulle hele lewe aan God gewy sou wees. Kom ons pas die simboliek op ons eie lewens en óns toewyding aan God toe:

- Die oor verteenwoordig die dinge wat ons hoor. Alles wat ons hoor

- die radio, televisie, CD's, DVD's, gesprekke - álles wat by ons ore ingaan, moet deur die kosbare bloed van die Lam gefiltreer word.

- Die duim verteenwoordig ons werke en elke vaardigheid waaroor ons beskik. Dit verteenwoordig ons dade. Alles wat ons doen behoort tot eer en verheerliking van God en in die krag van Christus gedoen te word.
- Die toon verteenwoordig waar ons heengaan, met ander woorde, ons doel en planne asook ons daaglikse wandel met die Here. Oral waar ons gaan, moet ons dink aan God en aan sy doel wat ons deur die bloed van die Lam ontvang het.

Kom ons praat nou oor nog 'n magtige deel van die liggaam, naamlik die tong. As ons vra dat die bloed van Christus ons tonge, ons woorde en ons spraak moet bedek, dan vra ons God om ons te beskerm sodat ons nie ons woorde sal gebruik om slegte dinge te sê, leuens te vertel, in woede te praat, te skinder of al daardie ander verkeerde dinge te sê wat 'n mens so maklik sê nie. Jesus het gesê:

"Maar Ek sê vir julle dat van elke ydele woord wat die mense praat, daarvan moet hulle rekenskap gee in die oordeelsdag. Want uit jou woorde sal jy geregverdig word, en uit jou woorde sal jy veroordeel word" (Matthéus 12:36-37).

Jakobus, die broer van Jesus, skryf die volgende:

"Net so is die tong ook 'n klein lid en beroem hom op groot dinge - kyk hoe 'n groot hoop hout steek 'n klein vuurtjie aan die brand. Die tong is ook 'n vuur, 'n wêreld van ongeregtigheid. Net so 'n plek neem die tong onder ons lede in; dit besmet die hele liggaam en steek die hele lewensloop aan die brand en word uit die hel aangesteek ... Maar die tong kan geen mens tem nie; dit is 'n onbedwingbare kwaad, vol dodelike gif' (Jakobus 3:5-6, 8).

En die apostel Paulus waarsku: *"En moenie murmereer soos ook sommige van hulle (die Israeliete in die woestyn) gemurmereer het nie, en hulle het deur die verderwer omgekom"* (I Korinthiërs 10:10).

As ons ons onderwerp aan die krag van Christus se bloed wat ín ons is, stel Hy ons in staat om 'n tong wat vroeër ontembaar was, in 'n instrument van lof en dank te verander. *"Laat ons dan gedurig deur Hom aan God 'n lofoffer bring, dit is die vrug van die lippe wat sy Naam bely"* (Hebreërs 13:15).

Alles wat ons sien, moet ook gefiltreer word deur die skerm van Jesus Christus se bloed. Dit sluit die TV, internet, tydskrifte, video's, DVD's, flieks en boeke in. Enige tyd- verdryf wat jou gedagtes kan weglei van God se doel en weë moet vermy word. Ons lees in Job 31:3 dat Job 'n verbond met sy oë gesluit het om te verseker dat hy sou doen wat reg was in God se oë (verwys Job 31:1, 7-8).

OORGEGEE AAN TRANSFORMASIE

As ons onsself oorgee om getransformeer te word na die beeld van

Christus, vervul ons tot in groot mate die doel van die verlossende bloed van Jesus. Ons is vir God gekoop sodat ons Hom kan dien en liefhê soos wat Christus Hom gedien en liefgehad het.

Toe die Israeliete van Moses se tyd die sonde-offer gebring het, is die vet op die altaar aan die brand gesteek "*as lieflike geur vir die Here*" (Levítikus 4:31). Dit was simbolies van die feit dat die mens die beste in homself vir die Here gegee het, daardie deel van homself wat oop was vir vernuwing, vir die reinigende vuur van goddelike heiligheid en liefde, sodat die innerlike mens van dag tot dag deur die Gees van die Here vernuwe kon word en uiteindelik verander kon word in kinders van God (Merrill F Unger in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary).*

Op 'n soortgelyke manier kan ons ook ons lewens vir die Here gee en die reiniging en vernuwing van Sy heiligheid en liefde ervaar. Dan sal ons lewens ook die heerlikheid van God deur die bloed van die Lam reflekteer.

Chapter 10: healing through the Blood

"By his wounds you have been healed."

—1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

I thank God for the precious blood that was shed on the cross many years ago so that you and I could be redeemed from the curse of the law and live for God in His grace. This is not wishful thinking but a spiritual reality. It took the blood of Jesus Christ being shed on the cross for us to be able to receive peace, healing, and deliverance. The supernatural influence of God comes against the supernatural influence of the enemy. The spiritual powers of God hit the forces of the devil head-on, and the devil's works crumble.

Our Great Healer

Whenever you speak the authority of the blood of Jesus Christ and actuate the power of the covenant of God, a battle will go on in the heavens and on the earth. When you stand boldly and proclaim the Word of the living God, therefore, know that things will happen: In the name of Jesus, demons will flee and diseases will be healed. Through the blood, many miracles, signs, and wonders will occur through the prayers of His people.

Earlier, we saw that blood is the protector of the physical body. It fights illness and disease. It is the body's frontline defense against germs, bacteria, and harmful microorganisms. It provides an organized resistance against anything that is harmful to the body.

Similarly, the precious blood of the Lamb protects those who are covered by the blood. He gives life and health because He is the Great Healer. Many times, I have seen the sick and lame healed through the name of Jesus and the blood of the cross.

Healed by His Stripes

One day, the Spirit of God spoke to me and told me to go to the children's hospital to pray for someone. I didn't know anyone who was admitted to that hospital, but I obeyed the Lord. His Spirit led me down a hallway to where I heard a child crying. I entered the child's room and tried to comfort him. Jesus said to me, "Lay your hands on his stomach and plead My blood covenant over him."

I obeyed the Lord, and the child went to sleep. The doctors did more X-rays and found that the little boy was completely healed. The blood of Jesus Christ had done its work. Isaiah the prophet proclaimed,

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.
(Isaiah 53:5)

With every stripe that tore into the flesh of His back, He provided for multitudes of illnesses, diseases, and injuries to be healed. Blind eyes and deaf ears were opened with every stripe. Mute tongues were loosed, the lame walked, and all types of deformities were transformed with every swing of the scourger's whip.

On another occasion, I was casting out spirits, as well as binding and loosing, when I became grieved because the person I was praying for at that particular time didn't seem to be getting any better. The Spirit of the Lord began to impress on me that I should plead the precious blood of the Lamb.

I began to say, "By the life and power of the blood of Christ Jesus, I take dominion over you, Satan. In the name of the Lord, you're going to loose this person and let him go. By the blood of the Lamb that He shed to deliver us from the power of the enemy, I claim healing."

As I pleaded the blood and claimed healing, I began to see an immediate change in the person. Many times since then, I've used this prayer as the Holy Spirit inspires me to. By the power of the blood of Jesus, the demons loose people and let them go. The power of God heals and mends them. I've even seen tissues repaired.

Rebuke Satan through the blood of the Lamb, and. he has to flee. The enemy cannot stay when you boldly proclaim the Word of God.

By Jesus’ stripes—those powerful stripes that He took for our healing—His power is as real today as it ever was. His blood will never lose its power!

Hoofstuk 10: Genesing deur die bloed

"...deur wie se wonde julle genees is."
- 2 Korinthiërs 3:18

Ek dank God vir die kosbare bloed wat soveel jare gelede aan die kruis gestort is sodat ek en jy van die wet verlos kan wees en in God se genade vir Hom kan leef. Dit is nie wensdenkery nie, maar 'n geestelike werklikheid. Die bloed van Jesus Christus moes aan die kruis vir ons gestort word sodat ons vrede, genesing en verlossing kon ontvang. Die bonatuurlike invloed van God word daardeur téén die bo- natuurlike invloed van die vyand gestel. Die geestelike krag van God het die krag van die duiwel tromp-op getref - en die duiwel se werke het verkrummel.

ONS GROOT GENEESHEER

Elke keer as jy die gesag van Jesus Christus se bloed spreek en die krag van God Se verbond in werking stel, woed daar 'n stryd in die hemele en ook op die aarde. As jy dus vreesloos die Woord van die lewende God verkondig, moet jy weet dat daar dinge gaan gebeur: in die Naam van Jesus sal demone vlug en sal siektes genees word. Deur die bloed en deur die gebede van Sy kinders sal daar baie wonder-werke en tekens plaasvind.

Ons het vroeër gesien dat die bloed die beskermer van die liggaam is. Dit beveg siekte. Dit is die liggaam se belangrikste beskerming teen kieme, bakterieë en skadelike mikro-organismes. Dit beskerm jou teen enigiets wat skadelik is vir die liggaam.

Net so sal die kosbare bloed van die Lam dié wat daardeur bedek word, beskerm. Hy skenk lewe en gesondheid omdat Hy die Groot Geneesheer is. Ek het al dikwels gesien hoe siekes en verlamdes in die Naam van Jesus en die bloed van die kruis genees word.

DEUR SY WONDE GENEES

Die Gees van God het eendag met my gepraat en my beveel om na 'n kinderhospitaal toe te gaan om vir iemand te bid. Ek het niemand in die hospitaal geken nie, maar het gehoorsaam. Die Heilige Gees het my deur 'n gang laat loop en ek het 'n kind hoor huil. Ek het by die kamer ingegaan en die kind probeer troos. Toe sê Jesus vir my: "Lê jou hande op sy maag en pleit my bloedverbond oor hom."

Ek het weer eens gehoorsaam en die kind het aan die slaap geraak. Die dokters het later nog X-strale geneem en bevind dat die seuntjie

heeltemal genees was. Die bloed van Jesus Christus het die werk gedoen. Die profeet Jesaja sê:
"Maar Hy is ter wille van ons oortredinge deurboor, ter wille van ons ongeregtighede is Hy verbrysel; die straf wat vir ons die vrede aanbring, was op Hom, en deur Sy wonde het daar vir ons genesing gekom" (Jesaja 53:5).
Met elke haal wat Jesus se rug verder verwond het, het Hy vir nóg meer siektes en beserings voorsiening gemaak. Blinde oë en dowe ore is met elke haal geopen. Stom tonge kon praat, die lammes het geloop en kreupeles is met elke haal van die kats genees.

By 'n ander geleentheid was ek besig om duiwels uit te dryf en geeste te bind. My gees het skielik swaar in my binneste geword, want dit was asof die persoon voor my net nie beter geword het nie. Toe sê die Gees van die Here vir my om die kosbare bloed van die Lam te pleit.

Ek het gesê: "Deur die lewe en krag van die bloed van Christus Jesus neem ek gesag oor jou, Satan. In die Naam van die Here, gaan jy jou houvas op hierdie persoon laat gaan - jy sál hom laat gaan. By die bloed van die Lam wat Hy gestort het om ons uit die mag van die vyand te bevry, eis ek nou genesing."

Toe ek die bloed pleit en genesing eis, kon ek onmiddellik die verandering in die persoon sien. En van daardie dag af het ek al dikwels dié gebed gebruik as die Heilige Gees my daartoe geïnspireer het. Die bloed van Jesus het tot gevolg dat demone hulle houvas op mense laat gaan. Die krag van God genees hulle. Ek het selfs al gesien hoe weef- sel genees word.

Bestraf Satan deur die bloed van die Lam, dan móét hy vlug. Die vyand kan nie bly waar 'n mens vreesloos die Woord van God verkondig nie. Deur Jesus se wonde - daardie kragtige wonde wat Hy gely het sodat ons genees kon word - is Sy krag vandag nog net so 'n realiteit as wat dit op daardie dag was. Sy bloed se krag sal nooit vervaag nie!

Chapter 11: DELIVERANCE THROUGH THE BLOOD

"They overcame [Satan] *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."* —Revelation 12:11

In the many revelations God has given me concerning the blood of the Lamb, an enlightening hope that has given me great strength and consolation is the fact that the blood is our defense for our lives and for spiritual warfare.

Through His blood, we are able to overcome the carnal nature that exists in each

of us from birth. Through His blood, we are able to overcome the evil and enticing world around us; we can overcome the temptation to sin, false condemnation, and sin's power in our lives. And through His blood, we are able to overcome the enemy. We have the power and authority to walk upon the back of Satan and defeat him in every way.

Jesus' blood has freed the church, the new people of God, from the power of the devil and all evil power. Even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, His blood is sufficient to carry us through.

Then she saw the Lord take the dragon's head and put it under His heels and crush it. Finally, He pried the keys of death and hell out of the dragon's hand. She said all this was possible because of the blood He shed.

The Tactics of the Enemy

It’s important that we first understand why we must battle the enemy. After God created a perfect world and sinless humanity, an ominous change took place. In Genesis 3, we read that the first man and woman, who were in communion with God, decided to establish a relationship with Satan, who was in rebellion against God.

Eve encountered Satan in the form of a serpent. She was deceived by the subtle temptations he offered her. Through the record of this biblical incident, God shows us that we can observe Satan’s ultimate destructive intentions for mankind and the methods he employs in achieving that goal.

The Enemy's Number One Goal: To Separate Humanity from God

Satan’s number one goal is to separate human beings from God so that they will be ultimately destroyed. The reason for Satan’s obvious hatred for mankind is found in Genesis 1:27: *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

Since the devil hates God so intensely, it is natural that this hatred would be extended to mankind, who is created in the image of God. Thus we became the object of Satan’s attacks and torments. Since he cannot attack God directly, Satan attacks Him by attacking His creation—especially the creature who was created with His nature.

This is why we should not be surprised when we become the target of the enemy’s anger and hatred. A relationship was established between man and Satan that is somewhat like the relationship between a hungry lion and a vulnerable lamb. Since that fateful day when Adam and Eve listened to the serpent, Satan has been constantly stalking man *“like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8).

One night, I awoke and everything seemed to be covered in red—the walls, the floors, even what was outside. I looked out the window, and there was a hedge built around my home. The peace of God came, and His voice said, “I will be a wall of fire about you, daughter, and I will overshadow you, protect you, and watch over you. I will do this for all My children who love Me and keep My commandments.”

I went back to sleep in the presence of God. I began to see fire, glory, and power, as the Word of God became alive. I could see what seemed to be the blood of Jesus covering things I didn’t even know He was covering. It was like a protective shield. Wherever I go to preach and pray, I talk about the blood of the Lamb because it is the keeping power of God.

Because of the divine image of God in man, and because of the protective covering that Jesus provides believers through the blood, Satan’s methods of attacking us are limited to enticement, temptation, and subterfuge. Yet these methods have been sufficient to entrap and

enslave untold millions of human beings over the millennia. This is the tragedy of the ages!

Satan's Simple Task

In many ways, Satan’s job is not difficult because every one of us gravitates toward sin.

Satan cannot force sin upon us, but he can work subtly to get us to yield to it. Remember, however, that all he is empowered to do is to tempt, entice, and deceive. When we yield, it is the lust that rules our hearts that makes us disobey God. The Bible tells us,

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)

Satan has made plans to ensnare you and me. Sometimes he will come subtly and sometimes he will assault openly. He operates throughout the realm we call the world. The world is the place where we live, think, and act. Our lives are played out like dramas twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We face overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable forces every day.

Attacked by "Philistines"

The ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines, always attacked the people of God whenever they detected a weakness in them. The Scriptures depict the Philistines as representative of all the things of the world that obstruct, oppose, and enslave the people of God.

Likewise, Satan empowers and emboldens anyone who has the slightest tendency to want to attack God's people. He never gets discouraged, and he never loses his willingness to accuse, frustrate, and attempt to defeat the believer.

Yet there is good news! Jesus has given us the assurance in His Word that we are not powerless against the enemy's forces if we will put our faith in Him. No power exists that can touch anyone who rests in His will by faith. The prophet Isaiah said,

"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord*, and their righteousness is from Me," says the* Lord*.*
(Isaiah 54:17)

I have learned that I have to come against the enemy in the name of the Lord of Hosts if I want to be victorious.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The forces of evil and darkness are constantly challenging the people of God. The boundary of the blood is the place of continual conflict. There is no letup in the battle with evil. Often, the enemy's spiritual opposition comes in the form of human opposition. We have ongoing warfare with the enemies of morality in our society. We battle for truth. We fight against wickedness and evil. We war against oppression and injustice.

This never-ending confrontation with the enemy of our souls is not only individual, but is also a battle for our families and nations. The illegal drug and pornography industries are regiments in today's Philistine army. So are the abortion mills. Those who promote violence and pervert morals are the Philistines who stand at the

boundary of the blood, plotting to destroy our families and our country.
I believe it is time for believers to stand up and speak out. It is not time for us to hold our peace in silence. Speak out against evil. We need to stand publicly against the things that tear down community standards and erode the moral fiber of our people. Whether we realize it or not, the enemy awaits us at the boundary of the blood every day.

One time, I was preaching in a service, and the Lord directed me to notice that there were many men present, and He gave me such compassion for them. I was preaching about perversion and the sins of our eyes, hands, and bodies. The Holy Spirit was dealing in a strong but kind way with the people. I was telling them that through the name of Jesus, there is hope. They could be delivered from any oppression or any evil spirit that was perplexing or tormenting them.

As I began to talk about the power of the name of Jesus and the blood of the Lamb, I saw a vision in the back of the church. It was a huge dove, and he was red and full of fire. As he flew about and flapped his wings, spectacular fireballs would come from him. As these fireballs dropped on the people, I saw that they were mixed with blood and vapors of smoke. Certain people would raise their hands and scream, “I want Jesus to set me free. I repent of my sins.”

As people came to the altar, they would be purged and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of God. It was a phenomenal and beautiful work of God. Hundreds were saved that day. As we proclaimed the Word of God, the power of the Holy Spirit came in and brought deliverance and hope.

We are living in a perverse generation. We must work with God in the power of His Holy Spirit, doing the will of the Father.

Deliverance Through the Cross

As I have preached at various churches, I have learned that, in every place where I saw a revelation of God's fire on the pulpit, deliverance would come. I would see angels touching the pulpit at various times and worshiping God. Often, I would see them holding one hand to heaven (sometimes both of them) as they magnified the Lord. I kept returning to churches like this, and one day, during a service, the glory of God rolled in with a mighty revelation. I saw angels come into the church with a large cross that looked about fifteen feet high. They went to the pulpit, which appeared to be on fire. The angels seemed to dig around in the floor, and then they anchored the cross in front of the pulpit. The cross was solid, but fire shot out of both ends and the top of it. I saw this revelation several times, and each time, there would be a great deliverance. Many people would come to the altar, get saved, and be delivered in a marvelous way. It was an awesome sight.

I wondered about what I had seen, so I began to ask the Lord, "God, what is all of this? What does this mean in the holy Word of God?" He said to me,

These pulpits that you see with the fire upon them represent pulpits where My true Word is being preached. These holy, anointed ministers are purifying the flock with the Word of God and the cross that you see. Therefore, I have established the cross there, and the Spirit is with them for the purposes of deliverance and for the Word of God to be fulfilled. This is a sign that things will happen that they have been asking Me to do, and it means they are preaching the pure, holy Word of God through the eternal and mighty power of the cross.

All over the land, I would see the same revelation. Again, as I observed the angels in action, it was almost like watching a movie screen. In many places, I would see angels come in like a cleanup crew and begin to sweep evil powers out of the churches. They would break the bonds of people and liberate them.

At one service, some people took pictures, and when they were developed, you could see fire around the people we were praying for. It was a brilliant red in color, and I was excited because it showed the revelation knowledge of the blood of Jesus Christ. It was awesome for

me to see these angels working in the spirit realm for God. While it excited me to see these things happen, they did not occur in all the churches or all the meetings.

One day, I was in prayer when the Lord began to talk to me about the revelations He was giving to me.

My child, you must learn that many times I will open up a vision to you, and what I'm showing you is not present right there before you. It will be for the future, or it will be happening in another part of the world. You were given the vision so that you can intercede. Listen to Me, and I will give you instructions on how to pray.

Sometimes, people will receive a revelation, and they will think that what is happening is right there beside their beds. They will think that what they are seeing is there in the room with them, but it is not so. I am a holy God, and I am protective of My children. I am revealing truth and mysteries to you so you can reveal them to the world.

I'm showing you one of the workings of the enemy, Satan, so that you can pray; and the blood that I shed—the blood covenant—will come and stop the flow of these channels, these avenues, of the devil.

I was so excited! I said, "Okay, Lord."

Time went by, and one day, I was in Phoenix to preach the gospel. Some of us had been in intercessory prayer for the city. We had prayed and gone to sleep, but I awoke at three o'clock in the morning. I felt as though I had been awake for hours.

I looked at the ceiling, and I could see something appearing before my eyes. A manifestation of a spiritual object came through the ceiling and hovered around in a circle. At one end of the object, I could see a small opening that measured about eight inches by twelve inches. I saw that the tiny opening was a door.

As I looked through this door, I could see a witch with a crystal ball sitting at a table. I knew that she could see from the crystal ball into the place where I was. I also knew that God had allowed me to see what I was seeing, and that He had allowed her to be able to do this in order to show me how to pray. I took in this whole scenario very quickly. Then the door shut, and the thing moved right out of the room.

I got up and said, "Lord, what in the world was that?" God said to

me,

I'm showing you strategy of the devil. Many witches and warlocks work for the devil in this area, and they have these crystal balls. They have figured out how to go through the airways and spy out the land in certain areas where My blood does not provide a covering. A blood covering can be provided only through prayer and through believing in Me and the covenant of God. Many do not believe in My protection as you do.

When My righteousness covers My children and they are living holy lives before Me, when they are doing the best they can, My covenant—the atonement— stands for them and their families. No matter where they are, no matter where their children are, a hedge of protection surrounds them.

Many do not believe this, but I know you do. I've proven this to you many times over with your own children and your family. Many times, I've saved your family from harmful things that crossed their paths.

My covenant—the atonement for the healing of the body, the blood that I shed over two thousand years ago—still stands today. My covenant promises are for you and your children.

The armlike object you saw, with the opening and a small door at the front of it, was a passageway from the crystal ball through the spirit realm to where you are in this home.

I allowed you to see this hovering in the atmosphere in order to teach you to pray. Watch closely, and I'll show you something else.

God then showed me what looked like a huge television screen. I could see a woman's face, and I would recognize her now if I could see her in the flesh. She was clearly visible, and she was hovering over a crystal ball and screaming in a loud voice. Then the devil came roaring and screaming into the place where she was. "Why did you let her see you?" Satan yelled. "Why did you let her see you?"

The woman and the devil began arguing. This led to fighting and more yelling. I heard the devil tell this wicked woman that she had a big mouth and would tell everybody. The devil—his form was huge—grabbed the wall and started roaring and screaming in anger. Then he went through the door, and the Lord suddenly spoke to me,

Plead My blood! Plead the blood of Jesus! Plead the blood that I shed. The life and the power of the blood of Jesus that was shed

two thousand years ago has never lost its power over situations like these. The blood has power over those crystal balls that are the spirit realm's venues of sin; it can shut those doors.

I did just as the Lord said because I believed Him. When I began to pray, I saw fire mixed with blood. I saw vapors of smoke. I saw the power of God shoot through the atmosphere and explode the woman's crystal ball. She screamed and ran all over the room; as the power of God hit again, she ran out of the room.

The Lord told me, "Pray in every area where I send you as you have just done here. Pray right now for others who have these crystal balls."

So I prayed for a long time. He showed me how to pray. His angels taught me how to pray through the Scriptures, how to bind and loose (see Matthew 18:18), how to plead His precious blood, and how to rely on the Word of God. Every time I would do these things, there would be a great deliverance among the people. In the spiritual realm, I saw the angels scatter many of the enemies of God's people. In one vision, I saw what looked like ten thousand scattered at one time.

I also saw people delivered who were in supernatural bondage. It was as though ropes and vines had grown around them, but when the fire hit them, the shackles would explode. I knew that God was showing me these mighty revelations through the power of His Holy Spirit. I thought, *God, You are such a wonderful God.*

Then I saw the dove of the Holy Spirit soaring through the heavens. God began to draw people by His Spirit, and I was so happy and excited to see the blessings and joy of the Lord. I truly began to understand that we are in a spiritual war where good is fighting against evil.

RECLAIMING WHAT SATAN HAS STOLEN

I have also found that the enemy often encroaches on our praise territory. He intrudes into our private worship, mocking the things of God. He invades the realm of praise. If we allow it, he will occupy places where he does not belong. He brashly invades God's territory and plans to take everything we allow him to take. We don't have to surrender to the enemy, however. The blood of Jesus makes it possible for us to reclaim what Satan, through deceit and trickery, has taken from us. In Christ, we can experience peace in this world.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Colossians 1:19-20)

Once I was praying for a girl who was only twelve years old. She had been attacked and molested. As I was praying for her, I felt led to have someone take a picture. I had her stand against the wall for the photograph. When the pictures were developed, the whole wall was covered in red. The Lord said, "That was my blood washing the child clean." Praise God for the blood of the Lamb!

I believe that my calling in God is to confront the lies of the devil. In many countries and islands of the world, I have done just that. I remember a time when my own child was using drugs, and I was praying for the power of Jesus to set him free. I actually saw the battle in the heavens as the devil and the demons fought the angels of God over my son.

I began to pray, and the Holy Spirit gave me the ability and the words to say, "The power and the life and the blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed on Calvary two thousand years ago, has never lost its power," and I would claim the Word of God for him. I would stand on the Word and stand against the devil as the Word would go forth. I saw the Word make the devil and the evil spirits back down. God would intervene for my son every time through the blood of the Lamb.

On one particular day, my spirit was raging because of spiritual warfare. I was earnestly interceding to God for a spiritual battle. At times, I would literally groan in my spirit as I poured out my soul to

God. Weeping tears of contrition, I pleaded with God for His deliverance. I had contacted some other people I had confidence in, some genuine prayer warriors, to intercede with me.

Suddenly, God spoke to me. Whether it was an audible voice that I heard or a strong impression in my spirit, I do not know. All I know is that it was a distinct voice, clear and unmistakable. This is what He spoke to me:

> Take heart, My child; stand firm in the boundary of blood. You need not struggle; for I, the Lord your God, will fight your battle for you.

In an instant, my burdens were lifted. It seemed as if the sun had suddenly broken through a very dark and foreboding cloud. I could pray with liberty and freedom. My spirit was soaring, and my heart was overflowing with joy. I remembered the verse that says,

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
(Hebrews 10:19-22)

THE VALLEY OF BLOOD

A story in the Old Testament tells of a time when the kings of Judah, Israel, and Edom were aligned against their enemy, the Moabites. (See 2 Kings 3.) The situation looked hopeless, and it seemed as if they were facing certain disaster. The kings sought advice from the prophet of God, and Elisha told them to dig the valley full of ditches. God would fill the ditches with water, although it would not rain and the wind would not blow. Further, He would give them victory over the Moabites.

Although they didn't understand the strange request, they obeyed God and dug the valley full of ditches. When the Moabite army heard that Judah, Israel, and Edom were coming, they marched confidently out to confront them. Early in the morning, they stormed through a mountain pass and suddenly saw what looked like a valley filled with blood. The ditches were full of water, and the rising sun glimmering on the waters caused the scene to appear to be a vast valley of blood.

The Moabites concluded, incorrectly, that the armies of Judah, Israel, and Edom had defeated each other so they ran forward to take the spoils. The people of God, however, waited in ambush and won a glorious victory.

The valley of blood is a symbol of victory for the believer. Christ's blood always routs the enemy; the devil flees from it. I have often pleaded the blood against an enemy or a negative situation and seen firsthand the power of God at work. The blood of Christ has never lost its power. Its strength is available for every believer.

The following are several verses from the Bible that talk about our ability to have victory over the enemy and our sinful nature:

Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
(Romans 6:12-14)

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
(James 4:4)

The enemy will take what we will give him through our indifference, neglect, disobedience, and compromise. It is up to us to stand firm and resist the temptations of the devil. Jesus Christ, the precious Lamb of God, stands at the boundary of blood as our great Conqueror. He is there to fight our battles for us and to help us slay all the giants in our paths.

Overcoming Blood

When Jesus died on Calvary, He opened up for us the fountain of His life's blood.

With that blood, we overcome the powers of darkness—the devil and the entire spiritual underworld. The blood is God's trophy that celebrates Christ's victory over death, hell, and the grave. Jesus said, *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"* (Revelation 1:18). His blood may not be visible to you and me, but you can be sure that demons and all other unclean spirits can see it. They are terrified by the blood. They run from it. They cannot remain in the presence of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Satan had no idea that the death of Christ would bring about his defeat, although prophets had predicted it for centuries. Paul called this truth *"a mystery"* or *"hidden wisdom."*

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

(1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

Satan and his demons failed utterly at Calvary; they lost their claim on our souls. The blood of Jesus is an eternal reminder to them of their failed mission. The immoral, spiritual underworld has diminished and hollow abilities now. Its strength was made null and void on the day Jesus died. They are now powerless over the souls of believers because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

This is why believers "plead the blood" when they are in a heated spiritual battle with the enemy. Paul explained the victory of the believer through Christ's blood:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:13-15)

In another vision about the blood of the Lamb, I was praying about a particular matter, and we were being attacked by evil powers. We were praying for people in the church, and there were many attacks of the devil—strange things happening, puzzling things for which we had no answer. The Spirit of the Lord fell on me, and we started singing:

By the life and the power and the blood of
Christ Jesus,
Satan, you have to go!
In the name of Jesus, He will make you whole.
Through the blood of the Lamb that was shed
on Calvary
So many years ago,
It's never lost its power.
By the life and the power of Christ Jesus,
you've got to go!

As we sang, there was a spiritual lifting and a freedom in the room where we were praying. It was through the blood of the Lamb that we got victory that day.

The blood of Christ is so powerful that it also protects us from the "angel of death":

Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.
(Exodus 12:13)

This passage is referring to real, physical death. The angel of death passed through the land, executing God's judgment against the Egyptians, slaying the firstborn. Thousands died that night in homes that did not have the blood applied to their doorposts. But the people who believed obeyed the Lord's command, applied the blood, and were spared God's wrath.

In a similar way, when the blood is applied spiritually to our souls, we are safe from the Second Death, which is eternal separation from God. Jesus said, *"Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die"* (John 11:26). Yet He also said,

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

(Revelation 21:8)

Thank God, we can overcome the temptation to sin, we can overcome the past, and we can overcome Satan—all enemies that try to destroy us—*"by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of* [our] *testimony"* (Revelation 12:11). Don't let the enemy rob you of the truth of what defeats him.

Sin is still costly. Man's inhumanity to man costs us more in human lives than we are willing to admit. But the sacrifices in the violent streets of our cities and on the war- ravaged battlefields of the world will never break the hold sin has on humanity.

Only Christ's blood can do this. Oh, the wonderful power of His blood! It has utterly destroyed the power of sin, death, the grave, and hell. The power of Jesus' blood has opened heaven for all to come who will. *"Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"* (Romans 5:9).

The theme of this chapter and the thrust of what God has revealed to me is that Jesus, our wonderful Lord and Savior, meets Satan, the flesh, and the world at the boundary of blood. Just as the Israelites did not have to fight if they trusted that God would fight for them— if they knew that *"the battle is the Lord's"* (1 Samuel 17:47)—so Jesus today fights our battles for us. He has shed His blood so that sin no longer has dominion over the believer who trusts completely in Him.

When Satan, the brash bully of the world, steps out to challenge God's cause, you can know that the blood of Christ provides every believer with the necessary provision to defeat him. I cannot express the joy that fills me when I think about the overcoming power that is made possible by the blood of the Lamb!

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Revelation 12:10-11)

All our lives, we are bombarded by the attacks of an enemy who relentlessly comes against us with accusations. He does his diabolical work before we get saved, and it seems as if his attacks intensify when

we recognize that Jesus is *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29).

John, in Revelation 12, properly named him *"the accuser"* (verse 10) and pictured him accusing God's people before Him day and night. We don't know all the forms that his accusations take, except that we have seen how he came against Job, and we know that Jesus revealed that he is a liar and the Father of Lies. (See John 8:44.) I know of times when godly people have been falsely accused on earth, and this has resulted in confusion and fears; therefore, I don't put anything past the chief slanderer.

The grand truth that gives us all cause for rejoicing is that the blood of the Lamb will eventually destroy and cast down the accuser. The blood, coupled with the believer's testimony, guarantees that he or she will become an overcomer.

Think of it! Because of the saving blood of Christ, the accuser is cast down. Satan's back is broken. The above Scripture from Revelation speaks of the time when, once and for all, the slanderer will be cowed and defeated.

This assurance should encourage every child of God to confidently plead the blood of the Lamb and boldly testify to His mighty power. Oh, there's power in the name of Jesus, and there's power in the blood of the Lamb!

Hoofstuk 11: Bevryding deur die bloed

"En hulle het hom (Satan) oorwin deur die bloed van die Lam en deur die woord van hulle qetuienis..."
- Openbaring 12:11

In die talle openbarings wat die Here my oor die bloed van die Lam gegee het was dit deurgaans vir my 'n bron van hoop en troos dat die bloed ons in ons lewens en ook in ons geestelike oorlogvoering beskerm.

Deur Sy bloed kan ons die vleeslike natuur wat van ons geboorte af in elkeen van ons aanwesig is, te bowe kom. Deur Sy bloed kan ons die boosheid in en aantrekkingskrag van die wêreld óm ons oorwin; ons kan die versoeking om te sondig te bowe kom, valse beskuldigings en die sonde se krag in ons lewe oorwin. En deur Sy bloed kan ons ons die vyand oorwin. Ja, ons beskik oor die krag en gesag om die Satan in alle opsigte te verslaan.

Jesus se bloed het die kerk, die nuwe volk van God, van die mag

van die duiwel en van alle bose magte bevry. Selfs al gaan ons deur 'n dal van doodskaduwee, is Sy bloed genoeg om ons ook dáárdeur te dra.

Ek het 'n boek deur Catherine van Siena gelees. Sy het ook 'n visioen van die Here Jesus en van Sy kruisiging gesien. Sy het gesien hoe Hy met 'n verheerlikte liggaam uit die dood en uit die graf uit opstaan. Hy was heerlik, pragtig en daar het lig uit die wonde aan Sy hande gestraal.

Sy sê die engele het saam met Hom gegaan en sy het demone in kettings voor Hom gesien. Catherine sê dat sy die Here in mag en krag sien staan het. Die duiwel het soos 'n draak voor Hom verskyn. Hulle het begin veg en die aarde is deur aardbewings geskud.

Toe sien sy hoe die Here die draak se kop onder Sy hakke vermorsel. Uiteindelik het Hy die sleutels van die dood en die hel uit die draak se hande uit geneem. Sy sê dat dit alles moontlik was danksy die bloed wat Hy gestort het (St Catherine van Siena in *The Dialogue of St Catherine of Siena,* vertaal deur Algat Thorlod).

DIE VYAND SE TAKTIEK

Dit is belangrik dat ons eers moet verstaan waarom ons teen die vyand moet veg. Die volmaakte en sondelose wêreld en mens wat God geskape het, het verander. Ons lees in Génesis 3 dat die eerste man en vrou, wat in gemeenskap met God geleef het, besluit het om 'n verhouding met die Satan aan te knoop - en hy was in opstand teen God.

Eva het eerste op hom afgekom. Hy was in die gedaante van 'n slang. Sy het geswig voor sy versoekings. Die Bybel sê vir ons wat die Satan se vernietigende planne vir die mens is en deur watter metodes hy sy planne wil bereik.

DIE VYAND SE EERSTE DOEL: OM DIE MENS VAN GOD TE VERVREEM

Die Satan se heel eerste doel is om die mens van God te vervreem sodat hy uiteindelik vernietig sal word. Waarom haat die Satan die mens so? Ons lees die antwoord op dié vraag in Génesis 1:27: *"En God het die mens geskape na sy beeld; na die beeld van God het Hy hom geskape; man en vrou het Hy hulle geskape"* (Génesis 1:27).

Die duiwel haat God intens, daarom is dit logies dat hy die mens, wat na die beeld van God geskape is, ook sal haat. Só het ons dan die teiken van sy aanvalle geword. Aangesien hy nie die Here self kan aanval nie, val hy Hom aan deur Sy skepping aan te val - en dan veral die wese wat na Sy beeld geskape is.

Dit is waarom ons nie verbaas moet wees as ons die teiken word van sy haat en woede nie. Die verhouding wat tussen die mens en die

Satan tot stand gekom het, is baie soos die verhouding tussen 'n honger leeu en 'n weerlose lam. Van daardie dag af toe Adam en Eva voor sy leuens geswig het, is hy voortdurend besig om op die mens jag te maak *"soos 'n brullende leeu (wat) soek wie hy kan verslind"* (1 Petrus 5:8).

Ek het een nag wakker geword en dit was asof alles óm my rooi was - die mure, die vloer, selfs alles buite. Ek het by die venster uitgekyk en daar was 'n heining om my huis gebou. Die vrede van God het van my besit geneem en sy stem het gesê: "Ek sal 'n muur van vuur óm jou wees, dogter, en Ek sal jou in my skadu hou en jou beskerm en oor jou waak. Ek sal dit doen vir al My kinders wat My liefhet en My gebooie onderhou."

Ek het in God se teenwoordigheid aan die slaap geraak. Ek het vuur, heerlikheid en krag gesien en die Woord van God het lewend geword. Ek het gesien hoe die bloed van Jesus dinge soos 'n beskermende skild bedek - dinge waarvan ek nie eens geweet het nie. En oral waar ek gaan om te preek en te bid, praat ek oor die bloed van die Lam omdat dit die behoudende krag van God is.

Danksy die beeld van God in die mens en danksy die beskerming wat gelowiges deur die bloed van Jesus geniet, is die Satan se aanvalsmetodes beperk tot versoeking en misleiding. Maar met dié metodes het hy deur die millennia daarin geslaag om miljoene der miljoene mense in sy mag te kry. Dit is die tragedie van die wêreld waarin ons leef.

DIE SATAN SE EENVOUDIGE TAAK

Die Satan se taak is nie so moeilik nie, omdat die mens van- self tot die sonde geneig is. Hy kan ons nie dwing om sonde te doen nie, maar hy kan subtiel werk om ons sover te kry om daaraan toe te gee. Onthou egter altyd dat sy mag beperk is tot misleiding en versoeking. As ons daaraan toegee, is dit die begeertes in ons harte wat ons daartoe bring om aan God ongehoorsaam te wees. Die Bybel sê vir ons:

"Maar elkeen word versoek as hy deur sy eie begeerlikheid weggesleep en verlok word. Daarna, as die begeerlikheid ontvang het, baar dit sonde; en as die sonde tot volle ontwikkeling gekom het, bring dit die dood voort" (Jakobus 1:14-15).

Die Satan het planne gemaak om jou en my in sy strikke in te lei. Soms benader hy ons subtiel en ander kere is sy aanvalle openlik en op die man af. Die hele wêreld soos ons dit ken is sy gevegsterrein. Die wêreld is die plek waar ons leef, dink en doen. Ons lewens is soos dramas wat 24 uur van elke dag, sewe dae van elke week afspeel. Ons kom elke dag voor oorweldigende en op die oog af onoorkomelike magte te staan.

DEUR DIE "FILISTYNE" AANGEVAL

Die ou vyande van Israel, die Filistyne, het die volk van God altyd aangeval as hulle 'n swak plek by die Israeliete waargeneem het. Die Skrif beeld die Filistyne uit as verteenwoordigend van al die dinge van die wêreld wat in die kinders van God se pad staan en van hulle slawe maak.

Net so sal die Satan enigeen wat God se kinders wil aan- val, toerus en bemagtig. Hy raak nooit ontmoedig nie en hy is altyd bereid om die gelowige te beskuldig, te frustreer en te probeer verslaan.

Maar daar is goeie nuus! Jesus gee vir ons in Sy Woord die versekering dat ons nie magteloos is teen die magte van die vyand as ons in Hom glo nie. Daar is geen mag wat enigeen wat in die geloof in Sy wil rus, kan onderkry nie. Die profeet Jesaja sê:

"Elke wapen wat teen jou gesmee word, sal niks uitrig nie; en elke tong wat teen jou opstaan in die gereg, sal jy weerlê. Dit is die erfdeel van die knegte van die Here en hulle geregtigheid wat uit My is, spreek die Here" (Jesaja 54:17).

Ek het geleer dat ek in die Naam van die Here van die leërskare teen die vyand moet staan as ek hom wil ver- slaan.

"Want hoewel ons in die vlees wandel, voer ons die stryd nie volgens die vlees nie; want die wapens van ons stryd is nie vleeslik nie, maar kragtig deur God om vestings neer te werp, terwyl ons planne verbreek en elke skans wat opgewerp word teen die kennis van God, en elke gedagte gevange neem tot die gehoorsaamheid aan Christus" (2 Korinthiërs 10:3-5).

Die magte van die duisternis en die bose is voortdurend besig om die kinders van God uit te daag. Die grens van die bloed is 'n plek van voortdurende konflik. Die stryd teen die bose hou net nooit op nie. Die vyand se geestelike teen- stand kom dikwels in die vorm van menslike teenstand na ons toe. Ons voer voortdurend 'n stryd teen die vyande van moraliteit. Ons veg om die waarheid. Ons veg teen die bose. Ons veg teen verdrukking en onreg.

Hierdie nimmereindigende konfrontasie met die vyand van ons siele is nie net 'n individuele stryd nie, maar ook een wat ons in ons families en ons volke voer. Die onwettige pornografiese en dwelmindustrieë is regimente in die Filistyne se leër. So ook die aborsieklinieke. Diegene wat geweld aanblaas en sedes afbreek, is Filistyne wat op die grens van die bloed staan en planne maak om ons families en ons land te vernietig.

Ek glo dit het tyd geword vir gelowiges om op te staan en hulle sê te sê. Dit is nie nou die tyd om stil te bly nie. Staan op en spreek jou uit teen die boosheid. Ons moet in die openbaar standpunt inneem teen die dinge wat die standaarde in ons gemeenskappe afbreek en die sedes van ons mense wegkalwe. Of ons dit nou besef of nie, die vyand wag elke dag by die grens van die bloed vir ons.

Ek was by geleentheid besig om te preek toe die Here my daarop gewys het dat daar baie mans in die kerk was. Daar het 'n diepe deernis vir hulle in my opgewel - deernis wat natuurlik van Hom af gekom het. Ek was besig om te preek oor perversie en die sondes van ons oë, hande en liggame. Die Heilige Gees het op 'n sterk maar terselfdertyd baie deernisvolle manier met die mense gewerk. Ek het vir hulle gesê dat daar in die Naam van Jesus hoop is. Hulle kon van enige bande of bose gees wat besig was om hulle te treiter, bevry word.

Toe ek oor die krag van Jesus se Naam en die bloed van die Lam begin praat, het ek 'n visioen agter in die kerk gesien. Dit was 'n baie groot duif en hy was bloedrooi en vol vuur. Hy het heen en weer gevlieg en sy vlerke geklap, en daar het pragtige vuurballe van hom afgeval tot op die mense. Die vuurballe was gemeng met bloed en rookwalms. Party mense het geskree: "Ek wil hê dat Jesus my moet bevry. Ek het berou oor my sondes en ek bely dit."

Mense het na die kansel begin stroom en hulle is deur die bloed van die Lam en die Woord van God gereinig. Dit was 'n geweldige en 'n pragtige werk van God. Honderde is daardie dag gered. Ons het die Woord van God verkondig en die krag van die Heilige Gees het ingekom en bevry- ding en hoop aan die mense gebring.

Ons leef in 'n perverse geslag. Ons moet saam met God in die krag van Sy Heilige Gees werk en die wil van die Vader doen.

BEVRYDING DEUR DIE KRUIS

Waar ek ook al in kerke gepreek en openbarings van God se vuur op kansels gesien het, was daar bevryding vir die mense. Ek het verskeie kere gesien hoe engele aan kansels raak en God aanbid. En ek het al dikwels gesien hoe hulle een hand - en soms albei hande - na die hemel opsteek en die Here loof.

Ek het weer en weer teruggekeer na daardie kerke en op 'n dag het die heerlikheid van God tydens 'n diens met 'n magtige openbaring oor my gespoel. Ek het gesien hoe en- gele by die kerk inkom met 'n groot kruis van omtrent vyf meter hoog. Hulle het na 'n kansel toe gegaan en dit het gelyk of die kansel aan die brand was. Die engele het in die vloer voor die kansel gegrawe en die kruis daar laat staan. Dit was 'n soliede kruis, maar daar het vuur van die punte af uitgeskiet. Ek het hierdie openbaring 'n paar keer gesien en elke keer was daar ongelooflike bevryding wat daarmee gepaard gegaan het. Talle mense het na die kansel toe gekom, is gered en ook op 'n wonderlike manier bevry. Dit was iets groots om te sien.

Ek het gewonder oor wat ek gesien het, daarom het ek vir die Here begin vra: "Here, wat beteken dit alles in die heilige Woord van God?" Toe sê Hy vir my:

"Die kansels wat jy sien met die vuur op, verteenwoordig kansels van waar My ware Woord verkondig word. Die heilige, gesalfde predikers reinig die kudde met die Woord van God en met die kruis wat jy sien. Daarom het Ek die kruis hier gevestig en is die Gees by hulle ter wille van bevryding en sodat die Woord vervul kan word. Dit is 'n teken dat dinge wat hulle vir My gevra het, gaan gebeur en dit beteken dat hulle die suiwer, heilige Woord van God deur die ewige en magtige krag van die kruis verkondig."

Ek het oral in die land dieselfde openbaring gesien. Dit was byna soos om na 'n rolprent te kyk. Soms het ek engele gesien wat in die kerk inkom en begin om bose magte uit te dryf. Hulle het die bande wat die mense gebind het, verbreek en hulle bevry.

By een diens het party mense foto's geneem en toe die foto’s ontwikkel is, kon jy duidelik vuur óm die mense vir wie ons besig was om te bid, sien. Dit was helder rooi en ek was baie opgewonde, want dit was 'n bewys van die openbaringskennis van die bloed van Jesus Christus. Dit was vir my groots om te sien hoe die engele in die geesteswêreld vir God werk en dit het my baie opgewonde gemaak. Dit het egter nie by ál die kerke waar ek gepreek het, gebeur nie.

Terwyl ek op 'n dag besig was om te bid, het die Here met my begin praat oor die openbarings wat Hy vir my gegee het.

"My kind, jy moet leer dat Ek dikwels vir jou 'n visioen sal oopmaak - en wat Ek vir jou wys is nie regtig daar voor jou nie. Dit dui op die toekoms, of op iets wat in 'n ander deel van die wêreld gebeur. Jy ontvang die visioen sodat jy kan intree. Luister na My en Ek sal vir jou opdragte gee oor hoe om te bid.

"Mense ontvang soms visioene en dink dan dat dit net daar op die plek, reg langs hulle beddens gebeur. Hulle dink dat dit by hulle in die kamer is - maar dit is nie so nie. Ek is 'n heilige God en Ek beskerm My kinders. Ek openbaar waarhede en verborge dinge aan jou sodat jy hulle aan die wêreld bekend kan maak.

"Ek wys vir jou een van die werkings van die vyand, die Satan, sodat jy kan bid; en die bloed wat Ek gestort het - die bloedverbond - sal kom en die vloei na hierdie kanale van die duiwel stuit." ”

Ek was só opgewonde. Ek het gesê: "Dis reg so, Here."

Die tyd het verbygegaan en ek was by geleentheid in Phoenix om die evangelie te verkondig. Ons was 'n groep wat besig was om vir die stad in te tree. Ons het gebid en toe gaan slaap, maar ek het drie-uur die móre weer wakker geword. Dit het gevoel asof ek al ure lank wakker was.

Ek het na die plafon gekyk en daar het iets voor my oë verskyn. Dit was die manifestering van 'n geestelike voor- werp en dit het deur die plafon gekom en in 'n sirkel bly hang. Daar was 'n klein opening, 'n deurtjie van so agt duim by twaalf duim, aan die een kant.

Ek het deur die deur gekyk en 'n heks met 'n kristalbal by 'n tafel sien sit. Ek het geweet dat sy in die kristalbal tot in die plek waar ek was, kon sien. Ek het ook geweet dat God my toegelaat het om dit te sien en dat Hy haar toegelaat het om dit te doen sodat Hy my kon wys hoe om te bid. Toe gaan die deur toe en die sirkel verdwyn.

Ek het opgestaan en gevra: "Here, wat op aarde was dit?" Toe sê Hy vir my:

"Ek wys vir jou die duiwel se strategie. Daar is baie hekse en towenaars wat in hierdie omgewing vir die dui- wel werk en hulle het sulke kristalballe. Hulle het 'n manier gekry om deur die lug te beweeg en te spioeneer in gebiede waar My bloed nie beskerm nie. 'n Bloedbedekking kan slegs deur gebed, deur geloof in My en deur die verbond van God voorsien word. Daar is talle wat nie soos jy in My beskerming glo nie.

"As my geregtigheid My kinders bedek en hulle heilige lewens voor My lei, as hulle hulle bes doen, geld my verbond - die versoening - vir hulle en hulle families. Dit maak nie saak waar hulle is nie, dit maak ook nie saak waar hulle kinders is nie, daar is 'n heining van beskerming óm hulle.

"Daar is baie wat dit nie glo nie, maar Ek weet dat jy dit wel glo. Ek het dit al baie keer met jou eie kinders en jou familie vir jou bewys. Ek het jou familie van skadelike dinge wat oor julle pad gekom het, gered.

"My verbond - die versoening vir die genesing van die liggaam, die bloed wat Ek meer as tweeduisend jaar gelede gestort het - staan vandag nog. My verbondsbeloftes geld vir jou en jou kinders.

"Die voorwerp wat jy gesien het met die opening en die klein deur aan die voorkant, was 'n gang van die kristalbal af déúr die geesteswêreld tot waar jy in hierdie huis is.

"Ek het jou toegelaat om te sien hoe dit in die atmosfeer hang om jou te leer om te bid. Kyk mooi, dan sal Ek jou iets anders wys."

Toe wys die Here vir my iets wat soos 'n groot TV-skerm lyk. Ek het 'n vrou se gesig gesien en ek sal haar herken as ek haar in lewende lywe sou sien. Sy was duidelik sigbaar en sy het oor 'n kristalbal gebuig en hard geskree. Toe kom die duiwel daar in en skree vir haar: "Hoekom het jy haar toegelaat om jou te sien? Hoekom het jy haar toegelaat om jou te sien?"

Die vrou en die duiwel het begin stry. Dit het tot 'n geskreeu en 'n bakleiery gelei. Ek het gehoor hoe die duiwel vir haar sê dat sy 'n groot mond het en vir almal sou vertel. Die duiwel - hy was yslik groot - het die muur gegryp en van woede gebulder. Toe beweeg hy deur die deur, en toe praat die Here skielik met my:

"Pleit my bloed! Pleit die bloed van Jesus! Pleit die bloed wat Ek gestort het. Die lewe en die krag van die bloed van Jesus wat

tweeduisend jaar gelede gestort is, het nog nie sy krag oor situasies soos hierdie verloor nie. Die bloed het krag oor daardie kristalballe wat die geesteswêreld se plekke van sonde is; dit kan die deure daarheen toemaak."

Ek het gemaak soos die Here gesê het, want ek het Hom geglo. Toe ek begin bid, het ek vuur en bloed gemeng, gesien. Ek het ook rookwalms gesien. Ek het gesien hoe die krag van God deur die atmosfeer trek en die vrou se kristal- bal laat ontplof. Sy het geskree en in die kamer rondgehard- loop. Die krag van God het haar weer getref - sy het by die kamer uitgehardloop.

Die Here het vir my gesê: "Bid in elke gebied waar Ek jou instuur net soos wat jy hier gedoen het. Bid nou vir die- gene wat hierdie kristalballe het."

Daarop het ek vir 'n lang tyd gebid. God het my gewys hoe om te bid. Sy engele het vir my geleer hoe om deur die Skrif te bid, hoe om te bind en te ontbind (verwys Matthéus 18:18), hoe om Sy kosbare bloed te pleit en hoe om op die Woord van God staat te maak. Elke keer as ek dit gedoen het, is mense kragtig verlos. Ek het gesien hoe engele in die geesteswêreld baie van die vyande van God se kinders verjaag. In een visioen het ek iets soos tienduisend mense gesien wat op een slag uitmekaargejaag is.

Ek het ook gesien hoe mense wat in die bande van bo- natuurlike magte was, bevry is. Dit was asof daar toue en ruie plante óm hulle was, maar elke keer as die vuur hulle getref het, het daardie dinge ontplof. Ek het geweet dat God vir my daardie magtige openbarings deur die krag van Sy Heilige Gees laat sien het. En ek het gedink: *"O God, U is so 'n wonderlike God!"*

Toe sien ek die duif van die Heilige Gees deur die hemel sweef. God het mense deur Sy Heilige Gees begin aantrek en ek was baie opgewonde en bly oor die seëninge en vreugde van die Here wat ek kon sien. Ek het waarlik begin verstaan dat ons in 'n geestelike oorlog gewikkel is waarin goed teen kwaad veg.

HERWIN WAT DIE SATAN GESTEEL HET

Ek het ook al gevind dat die vyand dikwels op die lofprysingsterrein indring. Hy dring in waar ons die Here aan- bid en bespot die dinge van God. Hy dring ook ons lofprysing binne. As ons dit gaan toelaat, gaan hy plekke in- neem waar hy nie hoort nie. Hy dring eenvoudig God se terrein binne en beplan om alles wat ons hom toelaat, te vat. Ons hoef egter nie aan die vyand toe te gee nie. Die bloed van Jesus maak dit vir ons moontlik om te herwin wat die Satan op 'n bedrieglike manier van ons af weggeneem het. Ons kán in Christus vrede in hierdie wêreld geniet.

"Want dit het die Vader behaag dat in Hom die ganse volheid sou woon en

dat Hy deur Hom alles met Homself sou versoen nadat Hy vrede gemaak het deur die bloed van Sy kruis - ek sê deur Hom - die dinge op die aarde sowel as die dinge in die hemele" (Kolossense 1:19-20).
Ek het by geleentheid vir 'n dogtertjie van twaalf gebid. Sy is aangeval en gemolesteer. Terwyl ek besig was om te bid, het ek gevoel dat ek 'n foto moes laat neem. Ek het haar vir die foto teen die muur laat staan. Toe die foto's ontwikkel is, was die hele muur bloedrooi. Die Here het gesê: "Dit was my bloed wat die kind skoongewas het." Loof God vir die bloed van die Lam!

Ek glo dat dit my roeping in God is om die leuens van die duiwel te konfronteer. En dit is presies wat ek in baie lande en op baie eilande reeds gedoen het. Daar was 'n tyd toe my eie kind dwelms gebruik het. Ek het gebid dat die krag van Jesus hom daarvan sou bevry. Ek het die stryd in die hemele gesien terwyl die duiwel en sy demone met die engele van God oor my seun geveg het.

Ek het begin bid en die Heilige Gees het vir my die woorde gegee om te sê: "Die krag en die lewe en die bloed van Jesus Christus, wat tweeduisend jaar gelede op Golgota gestort is, het nog nooit krag verloor nie." Daarop het ek die Woord van God vir hom opgeëis. Ek het die Woord geneem en teen die duiwel gestaan. Ek het gesien hoe die Woord van God uitgaan en die duiwel en sy bose geeste laat terugval. God sou elke keer deur die bloed van die Lam vir my seun intree.

Op een spesifieke dag was daar 'n geweldige worsteling in my gees as gevolg van die geestelike oorlogvoering. Ek het by die Here ingetree oor die geestelike stryd. Ek het met tye gekreun terwyl ek my siel voor Hom uitgestort het. Ek het gehuil en Hom om bevryding gesmeek. Ek het ook ander mense in wie ëk vertroue gehad het - party van hulle ware gebedsreuse - gevra om saam met my in te tree.

Skielik het die Here met my gepraat. Ek het nie geweet of dit 'n hoorbare stem was of net 'n stem in my binneste nie. Maar ek weet wel dat Hy duidelik vir my die volgende gesê het:
"Skep moed, my kind, staan sterk binne die grenslyn van die bloed. Jy hoef nie die stryd te stry nie, want Ek, die Here jou God, sal jou stryd vír jou stry."

Binne 'n oogwink het my gemoed sommer lig geword. Dit was asof die son skielik deur 'n donker wolk gebreek het. Ek kon met 'n gevoel van vryheid bid. My gees het gesweef en my hart het oorgeloop van blydskap. Ek het Hebreërs 10:19-22 onthou:
"Terwyl ons dan, broeders, vrymoedigheid het om in die heiligdom in te gaan deur die bloed van Jesus op die nuwe en lewende weg wat Hy vir ons ingewy het deur die voorhangsel heen, dit is Sy vlees, en ons 'n groot Priester oor die huis van God het, laat ons toetree met 'n *waaragtige hart in volle geloofsversekerdheid, die harte deur besprenkeling gereinig van 'n*

slegte gewete en die liggaam gewas met rein water."

DIE VALLEI VOL BLOED

Ons lees in die Ou Testament van die konings van Juda, Israel en Edom wat saam teen hulle gemeenskaplike vyand, die Moabiete, geveg het (verwys 2 Konings 3). Dit het na 'n hopelose situasie gelyk en die konings het die profeet Elisa geraadpleeg. Hy het vir hulle gesê om die hele vallei vol slote te grawe. Al sou dit nie reën nie en al sou daar geen wind waai nie, sou die Here die slote vol water maak. Hy sou ook vir hulle die oorwinning gee.

Hoewel hulle nie die opdrag verstaan het nie, het hulle die hele vallei vol slote gegrawe. Toe die Moabitiese leër hoor dat Juda, Israel en Edom in aantog was, het hulle vol vertroue uitgegaan om hulle te ontmoet. Hulle het vroeg die móre deur 'n bergpas gemarsjeer en skielik iets gesien wat soos 'n vallei vol bloed gelyk het. Die slote was vol wa- ter en die vroeë oggendson het rooi op die water weerkaats sodat dit soos 'n hele vallei vol bloed gelyk het.

Vas onder die indruk dat die Judeërs, Israeliete en Edomiete mekaar aangeval het, het die Moabiete ingestorm - reg in die lokval wat God se magte vir hulle gestel het. Nodeloos om te sê, het hulle daardie dag 'n klinkende oorwinning behaal.

Die vallei vol bloed is 'n simbool van oorwinning vir die gelowige. Christus se bloed verslaan altyd die vyand - die duiwel vlug daarvoor. Ek het dit al dikwels teen die vyand of teen 'n negatiewe situasie gepleit en gesien hoe die krag van God werk. Die bloed van Christus is vandag nog net so kragtig as wat dit tweeduisend jaar gelede was. Die krag daarvan is tot die beskikking van elke gelowige.

Hier volg 'n paar verse uit die Bybel wat verwys na ons vermoë om die vyand en ons sondige natuur te oorwin:

“Onderwerp julle dan aan God; weerstaan die duiwel, en hy sal van julle wegvlug" (Jakobus 4:7).

"Word toornig en moenie sondig nie; laat die son nie ondergaan oor julle toorn nie; en gee aan die duiwel geen plek nie" (Efésiërs 4:26-27).

"Laat die sonde dan in julle sterflike liggaam nie heers dat julle aan sy begeerlikhede gehoorsaam sou wees nie. En moenie julle lede stel tot beskikking van die sonde as werktuie van ongeregtigheid nie, maar stel julleself tot beskikking van God as mense wat uit die dode lewend geword het, en julle lede as werk- tuie van geregtigheid in die dien van God. Want die sonde sal oor julle nie heers nie; want julle is nie onder die wet nie, maar onder die genade" (Romeine 6:12-14).

"...weet julle nie dat die vriendskap van die wêreld vyandskap teen God is nie? Wie dan ’n vriend van die wêreld wil wees, word ’n vyand van God" (Jakobus 4:4).

Die vyand sal alles wat ons deur ons onverskilligheid, nalatigheid, ongehoorsaamheid en kompromieë vir hom gee, aangryp. Dit is óns

taak om sterk te staan en weerstand te bied teen die versoekings van die duiwel. Jesus Christus, die kosbare Lam van God, staan by die grenslyn van die bloed as ons Groot Oorwinnaar. Hy is daar om ons stryd vír ons te voer en ons te help om al die reuse op ons pad te verslaan.

SEEVIERENDE BLOED

Toe Jesus op Golgota gesterf het, het Hy vir ons die fontein van Sy lewensbloed geopen. Met daardie bloed het ons oor die magte van die duisternis getriomfeer - oor die duiwel en die onderwêreld. Die bloed is God se trofee wat Christus se oorwinning oor die dood, die hel en die graf vier. *"Ek is ... die lewende; en Ek was dood en kyk, Ek leef tot in alle ewigheid. Amen. En Ek het die sleutels van die doderyk en van die dood"* (Openbaring 1:17-18). Sy bloed is dalk nie vir jou en my sigbaar nie, maar jy kan bo alle twyfel weet dat die demone en al die onrein geeste dit kan sien. Hulle is dan ook vreesbevange daarvoor. Hulle vlug daarvan af weg. Hulle kan nie in die teenwoordigheid van Jesus Christus se bloed bly nie.

Satan het geen idee gehad dat hy deur Christus se dood verslaan sou word nie, alhoewel dit reeds eeue lank deur profete voorspel is. Paulus noem hierdie waarheid 'n *"verborgenheid"*.

"Maar ons spreek die wysheid van God, wat bestaan in verborgenheid wat bedek was en wat God van ewigheid afvoorbeskik het tot ons heerlikheid, wat niemand van die heersers van hierdie wêreld geken het nie - want as hulle dit geken het, sou hulle die Here van die heerlikheid nie gekruisig het nie" (1 Korinthiërs 2:7-8).

Satan en sy demone het by Golgota klaaglik misluk - hulle het hulle aanspraak op ons siele verloor. Die bloed van Jesus herinner hulle tot in ewigheid daaraan. Die bose geestelike onderwêreld het nou verminderde en leë vermoëns. Hulle krag is tot niet gemaak op die dag toe Jesus gesterf het. Danksy die bloed van Jesus Christus het hulle nou geen mag oor die siele van gelowiges nie.

Dit is waarom gelowiges "die bloed pleit" wanneer hulle in 'n hewige geestelike stryd met die vyand gewikkel is. Paulus verduidelik die oorwinning wat die gelowige deur die bloed van Christus behaal het, só:

"En *julle, wat dood was deur die misdade en die onbesnedenheid van die vlees, het Hy saam met Hom lewend gemaak deurdat Hy julle al die misdade vergeef het, en die skuldbrief teen ons, wat met sy insettinge vyandig was, uitgedelg en weggeruim het deur dit aan die kruis vas te nael, nadat Hy die owerhede en magte uit- geklee en hulle in die openbaar teenoongestel en daardeur oor hulle getriomfeer het"* (Kolossense 2:13-15).

In 'n ander visioen oor die bloed van die Lam het ek oor 'n bepaalde saak gebid en is ons deur bose magte aangeval. Ons het vir mense in

die kerk gebid en daar was baie aanvalle van die duiwel. Vreemde dinge het gebeur, dinge waarop ons geen antwoorde gehad het nie. Die Gees van die Here het oor my gekom en ons het begin sing:

"Deur die lewe en die krag en die bloed van Christus Jesus
moet jy gaan, Satan!
In die Naam van Jesus sal Hy julle heel maak.
Deur die bloed van die Lam wat soveel jaar gelede
op Golgota gestort is,
en nog nooit krag verloor het nie.
Deur die lewe en die krag van Christus Jesus moet jy
gaan!"

Terwyl ons gesing het, kon ons voel hoe daar bevryding kom in die vertrek waarin ons besig was om te bid. Dit was deur die bloed van die Lam wat ons daardie dag die oor- winning behaal het.

Die bloed van Christus is só kragtig dat dit ons ook teen die doodsengel beskerm:

"Maar die bloed sal vir julle 'n teken wees aan die huise waarin julle is: as Ek die bloed sien, sal Ek by julle verbygaan. En daar sal geen verderflike plaag onder julle wees wanneer Ek Egipteland tref nie" (Exodus 12:13).

Hierdie Skrifgedeelte verwys na die dood. Die doodsengel het deur die land getrek en God se oordeel teen die Egiptenaars voltrek deur al die eersgeborenes te tref. Duisende het daardie nag gesterf in al die huise wat nié bloed aan hulle deurkosyne gehad het nie. Maar die mense wat aan God gehoorsaam was en bloed aan hulle deurkosyne gesmeer het, is gespaar.

So kan ons ook sê dat as die bloed geestelik op ons siele toegepas is, ons veilig is teen die tweede dood, wat ewige vervreemding van God is. Jesus het gesê: *"...en elkeen wat lewe en in My glo, sal nooit sterwe tot in ewigheid nie"* (Johannes 11:26). Maar Hy het ook gesê:

"Maar wat die vreesagtiges aangaan en die ongelowiges en gruwelikes en moordenaars en hoereerders en towenaars en afgodedienaars en al die leuenaars - hulle deel is in die poel wat brand met vuur en swawel: dit is die tweede dood" (Openbaring 21:8).

Dank God dat ons die versoeking om te sondig te bowe kan kom; dat ons die verlede kan oorwin en dat ons oor die Satan kan seëvier - oor al die vyande wat probeer om ons te vernietig. En ons doen dit alles *"deur die bloed van die Lam en deur die woord van (ons) getuienis"* (Openbaring 12:11). Moenie toelaat dat die vyand jou beroof van die waarheid van wat hom verslaan nie.

Die sonde is nog steeds duur. Die mens se onmenslikheid teenoor ander kos meer in terme van menselewens as wat ons bereid is om te erken. Maar die offers wat gebring word in die gewelddadige strate van ons stede en op die slagvelde van die wêreld sal nooit die greep van die sonde op die mensdom breek nie.

Slegs die bloed van Christus kan dit doen. O, die wonderlike krag van Sy bloed! Dit het die krag van die sonde, die dood, die graf en die hel ten volle oorwin. Die krag van Jesus se bloed het die hemel oopgemaak vir almal wat daarheen wil kom. *"Veel meer dan sal ons, nou dat ons geregverdig is in sy bloed, deur Hom gered word van die toorn"* (Romeine 5:9).

Die tema van hierdie hoofstuk en die kern van wat God aan my geopenbaar het, is dat Jesus, ons wonderlike Here en Verlosser, die Satan, die vlees en die wêreld by die grens van die bloed ontmoet. Net soos die Israeliete nie nodig gehad het om te veg as hulle vertrou het dat God vír hulle sou veg nie - as hulle dus geglo het dat die stryd aan die Here behoort (verwys 1 Samuel 17:47) - net so voer Jesus vandag nog die stryd namens ons. Hy het Sy bloed gestort sodat die sonde nie meer mag het oor die gelowige wat sy vertroue volkome in Hom stel nie.

Elke keer as die Satan God se saak uitdaag, kan jy maar weet dat die bloed van Christus jou en elke ander gelowige toerus om hom te verslaan. Ek kan nie vir jou sê watter vreugde deur my spoel as ek dink aan die seëvierende krag wat daar in die bloed van die Lam lê nie.

"Toe hoor ek 'n groot stem in die hemel sê: Nou het die heil en die krag en die koningskap die eiendom van onse God geword, en die mag van sy Christus; want die aanklaer van ons broeders is neergewerp, hy wat hulle aanklaag voor onse God, dag en nag. En hulle het hom oorwin deur die bloed van die Lam en deur die woord van hulle getuienis, en hulle het tot die dood toe hulle lewe nie liefgehad nie" (Openbaring 12:10-11).

Ons word ons lewe lank gebombardeer deur 'n vyand wat ons genadeloos met beskuldigings aanval. Hy doen sy diaboliese werk voordat ons gered is en dit is asof sy aanvalle net nog feller raak wanneer ons besef dat Jesus *"die Lam van God (is) wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem"* (Johannes 1:29).

Johannes noem hom in Openbaring 12 die *"aanklaer"* (v 10) en sê dat hy God se kinders dag en nag aankla. Ons weet nie presies watter vorm sy beskuldigings aanneem nie, maar ons weet wel hoe hy Job aangekla het en ons weet dat Jesus gesê het dat hy 'n leuenaar en die vader van alle leuens is (verwys Johannes 8:44). Ek weet van kere waar godvresende mense hier op aarde valslik beskuldig is en ek weet dat dit tot verwarring en hartseer gelei het, daarom glo ek dat hy tot enigiets in staat is.

Die heerlike waarheid en iets wat vir ons almal 'n bron van groot vreugde is, is die feit dat die bloed van die Lam die aanklaer uiteindelik gaan vernietig en neerwerp. Die bloed, saam met die gelowige se getuienis, waarborg dat hy of sy as oorwinnaar uit die stryd sal tree.

Dink net daaraan! Danksy die reddende bloed van Christus is die aanklaer neergewerp. Satan se rug is gebreek. Die Skrifgedeelte uit Openbaring dui op 'n tyd wanneer die leuenaar vir altyd verslaan sal wees.

Hierdie versekering moet elke kind van God laat moed skep sodat hy of sy met vertroue die bloed sal pleit en vreesloos oor die kragtige bloed van die Lam sal getuig. O, watter krag is daar in die Naam van Jesus en in die bloed van die Lam!

Chapter 12: THE BLOOD AND THE KINGDOM

"To Him who loved us...and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father." —Revelation 1:5-6

The record of the beginning of Jesus' ministry significantly includes the announcement that He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom:

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

The atoning blood of Jesus does not have as its purpose only our salvation, although that is its first and most momentous result. God also has in mind the building of His kingdom. In the heavenly Father's plan, there is a connection between our being redeemed by the blood of Christ and His kingdom, in which He has given us a significant role. We see this connection in the following Scriptures:

*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and **washed us from our sins in His own blood,** and **has made us kings and priests to His God and Father,** to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
(Revelation 1:5-6, emphasis added)

*You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have **made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall*** **reign on the earth.**
(Revelation 5:9-10, emphasis added)

Through the blood of Christ, we have become *"kings and priests"* to our heavenly Father. As kings, we are to promote justice and the ways of God in the earth. As priests, we are to carry out our ministry of reconciliation, bringing others to God through our Great High Priest, the Mediator of the new covenant.

GOD'S KINGDOM PEOPLE

God has always had a people. The people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, had been set free from Egyptian slavery by a series of miracles under the leadership of Moses. In the thirteenth century before Christ, led by Moses' successor, Joshua, they had conquered Canaan and inhabited the land God had promised them.

The inauguration of this "kingdom people" was accomplished by blood. Exodus 24 tells the experience of Moses coming down from the mountain where he had received the law of God and calling together the people to bind them into a covenant relationship with God. It was an alliance sealed with blood:

> *Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do."..Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord....And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."*

(Exodus 24:3, 5, 8)

Although the phrase *kingdom of God* is an expression unique to the New Testament, the concept of the people of God living under His kingship in a covenant relationship is an ancient one. The kingdom that God wished to establish with obedient people began when they offered sacrifices. The shedding of blood signified their willingness to enter into covenant with Him, and their being sprinkled by the blood set them apart as God's covenant people.

The "kingdom" in its infancy took its first political shape after the conquest of Canaan and further developed under the successive kingships of Saul, David, and Solomon. Israel and Judah, which existed as both united and separate entities, were earthly expressions of the spiritual idea of a called- out people living under the ultimate kingship of God Himself.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

The prophets of Israel understood—much better, apparently, than the people themselves—the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God. They realized that God intended for the citizens of the kingdom to live lives marked by righteousness and justice. A remarkable series of these men of God over a period of nearly a millennium repeatedly charged the imperfect followers of Jehovah to change their ways and live as God intended.

Although I could quote any number of the prophets testifying of the failures of God's people to live up to their calling, Jeremiah is representative of those who recognized how far the people fell short of God's expectations and who continually exhorted them to holy living.

The Weeping Prophet, as Jeremiah came to be known, condemned ungodly conduct and challenged Israel to live up to her calling. Perhaps clearer than some of the other prophets, he looked forward to a new day and a new covenant that would replace the failed relationship that existed between the people and their God. He had a realistic vision of the new kingdom brought into being by God's coming King.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Other notable prophets, such as Amos and Hosea, reiterated the same message: God desires to have a people who will live up to His desires and expectations for them.

The prophet Zechariah strikingly foretold the coming of the Messiah, who would set up an ultimate kingdom whose *"dominion shall be from sea to sea.'"* (See Zechariah 9:9- 11.) Zechariah reminded his hearers that— although they had been unfaithful to it—they were still part of a covenant that had been established by blood. He wrote, *"As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit" (Zechariah 9:11).*

Along with their thunderous warnings of judgment if the people failed to follow God, the prophets shared with their hearers the

promises of the blessings of God if they would repent and turn back to Him. For the most part, their message seemed to fall on deaf ears. Occasionally, though, the Bible reports of a remnant who clung to the Word of God.

It is a faithful remnant in the New Testament who, hearing the message of the Messiah Himself and accepting it, would be the first to enter into the New Israel, the long-awaited kingdom of God.

The Character of the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is manifestly different from any earthly kingdom. Its distinctives lie in the manner in which people become citizens, the laws that govern their daily existence, and its ultimate outcome.

Born of Blood

The only way a person can become a citizen of the kingdom of God is to born into it, but not with a natural birth. Jesus taught, *"You must be born again"* (John 3:7). Speaking later to His followers, He was more specific about the role that identifying with His death would play in their salvation and entrance into the kingdom:

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly,
I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."
(John 6:53-56)

This saying of Jesus puzzled those who heard it, and some among them attempted to understand it literally. From the perspective of the institution of the Lord's Supper, however, it is easy to understand that He was speaking of a relationship of identification with His sacrifice.

Jesus was by no means advocating a kind of first-century cannibalism; He was simply saying that by identifying with the sacrifice of His body and blood on the cross, believers can experience a new birth, born of blood—not a natural birth, but a spiritual new creation made possible by His blood sacrifice.

Christian baptism became the sign that a believer had entered the new covenant. Paul discussed the theological application of baptism in Romans 6:4, when he wrote,

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Kingdom citizens enter the new realm by the new birth and receive a totally new life.

LAW OF LOVE

Every kingdom has laws that govern the conduct of its people. The Old Testament law was the code of Moses, delivered by God Himself at Mount Sinai. The New Testament law is quite different. Rather than being written on tablets of stone, it is engraved on *"tablets.. .of the heart"* (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Jesus expressed the tenets of kingdom law in His Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5-7. He said that the spirit of the Old Testament law can be realized in a life guided by a desire to obey and please the heavenly Father:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19)

The blood of Jesus purchased a *"new and living way"* (Hebrews 10:20), a way of obedience to the law of love. That is the standard by which citizens live in the kingdom of God.

A DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE

Blood-bought kingdom citizens live such a different lifestyle from those around them that the world notices them and their distinctiveness. They live differently than they did before they came into the kingdom. Colossians 3:9-10 explains,

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Kingdom citizens make choices about how to conduct themselves based on what pleases God.

How can we make such a lifestyle a reality in our daily lives? Philippians 2:5 says, *"Let this mind he in you which was also in Christ Jesus."* The only way we can live by the law of love is to think as Jesus thought. This becomes possible when we are filled with the same Holy Spirit who indwells Him. *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

THE ALREADY AND THE NOT YET

Some Bible teachers who discuss the expectations of those who lived before the coming of Christ use a compelling illustration to show how these people from earlier times perceived the impact of Messiah's coming and the initiation of the new kingdom. The teachers draw two circles side by side. The one on the left represents this present world. The one on the right represents the world to come. In between is a cataclysmic event: the coming of the Messiah Himself.

The perspective of people from ancient times was that the coming of the Messiah would initiate a completely new order of things. The old world ("this present world") would be done away with, and a new world ("the world to come") would replace it.

Those of us who live on this side of the New Testament understand that the drawing needs to be altered in order to be biblically correct. The two circles still represent this present world and the world to come; however, rather than being side by side, the two circles should overlap each other so that there is a space covered by both circles. It is in this space that the kingdom of God now exists. Kingdom citizens are still part of this present world, but they have also entered the world to come.

This is the nature of the blood-bought kingdom. On the one hand, the kingdom is a present, already realized reality. On the other hand, it is a kingdom of the future, not yet fully established.

Since Jesus died on the cross, paying the price for sin with His sacrificial blood, the enemy has been defeated. It was at Calvary that the kingdom came into being. It is a victorious kingdom, for Jesus Himself declared, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"* (Luke 10:18). Satan's power is crushed, and his ultimate doom has already been decided.

While all this is true, we recognize that Satan has not admitted defeat. Although the sting has been taken from his power, the battle between good and evil will continue until the ultimate realization of the kingdom.

At the end of time and the beginning of eternity, the great hymn of glory will be the song of the blood and of praise to the Lamb who was slain. (See Revelation 5:12-14.) I believe that this song will usher in

the fullness of the blood-bought kingdom of God. Until then, we can learn to live as kings and priests before our heavenly Father, living in the law of love and fulfilling His commands out of willing hearts.

Hoofstuk 12: Die bloed en die koninkryk

"Aan Hom wat ons liefgehad het... en ons gemaak het konings en priesters vir sy God en Vader..." - Openbarinq 1:5-6

Waar ons lees oor die begin van Jesus se aardse bediening, sien ons dat Hy gekom het om die evangelie van die koninkryk te verkondig: "*En nadat Johannes oorgelewer was, het Jesus in Galiléa gekom en die evangelie van die koninkryk van God verkondig en gesê: Die tyd is vervul en die koninkryk van God het naby gekom; bekeer julle en glo die evangelie"* (Markus 1:14-15).

Die versoenende bloed van Jesus is nie net gestort om ons te verlos nie, hoewel dit die eerste gevolg daarvan is. Met die stort van Jesus se bloed wil God ook hê dat Sy koninkryk uitgebou moet word. In ons hemelse Vader se plan is daar 'n verband tussen ons verlossing deur die bloed van Christus en Sy koninkryk - en Hy het hierin vir ons 'n belangrike rol gegee. Ons sien hierdie verband duidelik in die volgende Skrifgedeeltes:

"...Jesus Christus, die getroue getuie, die eersgeborene uit die do- de en die Owerste oor die konings van die aarde! Aan Hom wat ons liefgehad het en ***van ons sondes gewas het in Sy bloed en ons gemaak het konings en priesters vir Sy God en Vader,*** *aan Hom die heerlikheid en die krag tot in alle ewigheid! Amen"* (Openbaring 1:5-6, klem bygevoeg).

"U is waardig om die boek te neem en sy seëls oop te maak, want U is geslag en het ons vir God met u bloed gekoop uit elke stam en taal en volk en nasie, en ***het ons konings en priesters vir onse God gemaak, en ons sal as konings op die aarde heers"*** (Openbaring 5:9-10, klem bygevoeg).

Ons het deur die bloed van Christus "konings en priesters" vir ons hemelse Vader geword. As konings moet ons geregtigheid en ook die weë van God hier op aarde bevorder. En as priesters moet ons ons bediening van versoening uitvoer en ander deur ons Groot Hoëpriester, die Tussenganger van die nuwe verbond, na God lei.

GOD SE KONINKRYKSVOLK

God het nog altyd 'n volk gehad. Die volk van Israel, die nageslag van Abraham, is danksy 'n reeks wonderwerke uit Egipte bevry. Dit het onder Moses se leierskap gebeur. In die dertiende eeu voor Christus het hulle, onder die lei- ding van Josua, Moses se opvolger, die land

Kanaan oorwin en só die land wat die Here aan hulle beloof het, in besit geneem.

Die wyding van hierdie koninkryksvolk het deur bloed plaasgevind. Ons lees in Exodus 24 dat Moses met die wet van God van die berg afgekom en die volk byeengeroep het om hulle in 'n verbondsverhouding met God te bring. Dit was 'n verhouding wat met bloed beseël sou word:

"Toe Moses kom en aan die volk al die woorde van die Here en al die verordeninge vertel, antwoord die hele volk met een stem en sê: Al die woorde wat die Here gespreek het, sal ons doen ... En hy het jongmanne van die kinders van Israel gestuur; dié het brand- offers geoffer en as dankoffers bulle vir die Here geslag ... Toe neem Moses die bloed en gooi dit uit op die volk en sê: Dit is die bloed van die verbond wat die Here met julle gesluit het op grond van al hierdie woorde" (Exodus 24:3, 5, 8).

Hoewel die term koninkryk van God 'n Nuwe Testamentiese term is, is die konsep van die volk van God wat onder sy koningskap in 'n verbondsverhouding met Hom leef, reeds 'n baie ou een. Die koninkryk wat God met gehoor- same mense wou vestig, het reeds begin toe hulle offers aan Hom gebring het. Die stort van bloed het gedui op hulle gewilligheid om 'n verbond met Hom te sluit en die feit dat hulle met bloed besprinkel is, het hulle as Sy verbondsvolk onderskei.

Die eerste fase van die koninkryk is gevestig na die oorname van Kanaán en dit is verder uitgebou onder die heerskappy van die konings - Saul, Dawid en Salomo. Israel en Juda, wat eers as één en later as twee ryke bestaan het, was aardse vergestaltings van die geestelike konsep van 'n volk wat geroep is om onder die koningskap van God self te leef.

DIE PROFETE SE BOODSKAP

Die profete van Israel het die geestelike aard van die koninkryk van God verstaan - en hulle het dit skynbaar baie beter as die res van die volk verstaan. Hulle het besef dat God wou hê dat die mense van Sy koninkryk se lewens deur geregtigheid gekenmerk moes word. Hierdie merk- waardige groep manne wat oor 'n tydperk van byna 'n millennium onder die volk gewoon en gewerk het, het hulle gemaan om te leef soos wat God wou hê hulle moes leef.

Hoewel ek sekerlik heelparty profete kan aanhaal wat praat oor die onvermoë van God se volk om volgens Sy wil en weë te leef, is Jeremia verteenwoordigend van dié wat besef het hoe ver hulle tekortgeskiet het en wat hulle dan ook voortdurend vermaan het om heilig te lewe.

Jeremia, die treurende profeet, het hulle goddelose optrede veroordeel en het die volk van Israel uitgedaag om binne hulle

goddelike roeping te leef. Hy het ook uitgesien na die dag waarop die mislukte verhouding tussen mens en God deur 'n nuwe verbond vervang sou word. Hy het 'n realistiese visioen gehad van die nuwe koninkryk wat deur God se toekomstige Koning ingestel sou word.
"Kyk, daar kom dae, spreek die Here, dat Ek vir Dawid 'n regverdige Spruit sal verwek, en as Koning sal Hy regeer en verstandig handel en reg en geregtigheid doen in die land. In sy dae sal Juda verlos word en Israel veilig woon; en dit is sy naam waarmee Hy genoem sal word: DIE HERE ONS GEREGTIGHEID" (Jeremia 23:5-6).
Ander profete soos Amos en Hoséa het dieselfde boodskap beklemtoon, naamlik dat God 'n volk wil hê wat binne Sy wil en verwagtinge vir hulle sal leef.

Die profeet Sagaría vertel treffend van die koms van die Messias, wat sy koninkryk sal vestig, en dit sal strek *"van see tot see"* (verwys Sagaría 9:9-11). Sagaría het sy toe- hoorders daaraan herinner dat hulle - al was hulle ontrou - steeds deel was van 'n verbond wat deur bloed gevestig is. Hy skryf: *"Ook sal Ek wat jou betref, o Sion, kragtens die bloed van jou verbond jou gevangenes loslaat uit die put sonder water"* (Sagaría 9:11).

Saam met die ernstige waarskuwings oor die oordele wat hulle sou tref as hulle van die Here God sou afdwaal, het die profete ook vir die mense vertel van God se beloftes van seën as hulle berou oor hulle sondes sou hê en hulle weer tot Hom sou bekeer. Dikwels het hulle boodskappe op dowe ore geval. Ons lees egter in die Bybel dat daar van tyd tot tyd groepe was wat aan die Woord van God vasgehou het.

Dit is 'n getroue oorblyfsel in die Nuwe Testament wat, as hulle die boodskap van die Messias hoor en aanneem, die eerste sal wees om in die Nuwe Israel, die langverwagte koninkryk van God, in te gaan.

DIE AARD VAN DIE KONINKRYK

Die koninkryk van God is heeltemal anders as enige aardse koninkryk. Die eienskappe van dié koninkryk lê in die wyse waarop mense burgers daarvan word, die wette wat daarin geld en die uiteindelike uitkoms daarvan.

UIT BLOED GEBORE

Die enigste manier waarop 'n mens 'n burger van God se koninkryk kan word is deur geboorte - maar nié deur 'n natuurlike geboorte nie. Jesus sê vir ons: *"...julle moet weer gebore word..."* (Johannes 3:7). Later, in 'n gesprek met sy volgelinge, het Hy vir hulle gesê hoe belangrik dit is om met Sy dood te identifiseer en watter rol dit in 'n mens se verlossing en jou toegang tot die koninkryk speel:
"En *Jesus sê vir hulle: Voorwaar, voorwaar Ek sê vir julle, as julle nie die vlees van die Seun van die mens eet en sy bloed drink nie, het julle geen*

lewe in julleself nie. Hy wat My vlees eet en My bloed drink, het die ewige lewe, en Ek sal hom opwek in die laaste dag. Want My vlees is waarlik spys, en My bloed is waarlik drank. Wie My vlees eet en My bloed drink, bly in My en Ek in hom" (Johannes 6:53-56).
Hierdie woorde van Jesus het Sy toehoorders verstom en party van hulle het probeer om dit letterlik te verstaan. As 'n mens egter vanuit die perspektief van die Nagmaal daar- na kyk, is dit maklik om te verstaan dat Hy bedoel het dat 'n mens met die offer wat Hy gebring het, moet identifiseer.

Jesus het hoegenaamd nie gepraat van 'n soort kannibalisme nie. Nee, wat Hy bedoel het, was dat die gelowige, deur met die offer van Sy liggaam en bloed aan die kruis te identifiseer, 'n nuwe geboorte kan ervaar, 'n geboorte wat uit bloed is - nie 'n natuurlike geboorte nie, maar 'n geestelike nuutskepping wat deur Sy bloedoffer moontlik gemaak is.

Die Christelike doop het die teken geword dat 'n gelowige deel verkry het aan die nuwe verbond. Paulus bespreek die teologiese toepassing van die doop in Romeine 6:4 waar hy skryf:
"Ons is dus saam met Hom begrawe deur die doop in die dood, sodat net soos Christus uit die dode opgewek is deur die heerlikheid van die Vader, ons ook so in 'n nuwe lewe kan wandel."
Koninkryksburgers gaan deur die nuwe geboorte in die nuwe werklikheid in en ontvang 'n splinternuwe lewe.

DIE WET VAN LIEFDE
Elke koninkryk het wette wat die optrede van sy mense rig. Die Ou-Testamentiese wet was die wet van Moses, wat deur God self op Sinai aan Moses gegee is. Die Nuwe- Testamentiese wet is heeltemal anders. Dit is nie meer op klip geskryf nie, maar *"op die vleestafels van die hart"* (2 Korinthiërs 3:3).

Jesus het die kernaspekte van die koninkrykswet in Sy bergrede verduidelik - ons lees dit in Matthéus 5-7. Hy sê dat die gees van die Ou-Testamentiese wet saamgevat kan word in 'n lewe wat daarna streef om die hemelse Vader te gehoorsaam en te behaag:
"Moenie dink dat Ek gekom het om die wet of die profete te ontbind nie. Ek het nie gekom om te ontbind nie, maar om te vervul. Want voorwaar Ek sê vir julle, voordat die hemel en die aarde verbygaan, sal nie een jota of een titteltjie van die wet ooit verby- gaan totdat alles gebeur het nie. Elkeen dus wat een van die minste van hierdie gebooie breek en die mense só leer, sal die minste genoem word in die koninkryk van die hemele; maar elkeen wat dit doen en leer, hy sal groot genoem word in die koninkryk van die hemele" (Matthéus 5:17-19).
Die bloed van Jesus het *"'n nuwe en lewende weg"* vir ons gekoop (Hebreërs 10:20), 'n manier waarop ons aan die wet van die liefde

gehoorsaam kan wees. Dít is die standaard waarvolgens burgers in die koninkryk van God leef.

'n KENMERKENDE LEEFSTYL

Koninkryksburgers wat deur die bloed losgekoop is, leef só anders as die mense rondom hulle, dat die wêreld hulle raaksien en ook raaksien dat hulle anders is. Hulle leef anders as vóór hulle deel van God se koninkryk was. Kolossense 3:9-10 verduidelik dit só:
"Lieg nie vir mekaar nie, omdat julle die oue mens met sy werke afgelê het en julle jul met die nuwe mens beklee het wat vernuwe word tot kennis na die beeld van sy Skepper" (Kolossense 3:9- 10).
Koninkryksburgers oefen sekere keuses uit ten opsigte van hóé hulle gaan lewe en wát God behaag.

Hoe kan ons so 'n leefstyl 'n realiteit maak in ons daaglikse lewens? Filippense 2:5 sê: *"Want hierdie gesindheid moet in julle wees wat ook in Christus Jesus was."* Die enigste manier waarop ons volgens die wet van liefde kan leef, is as ons gaan dink soos wat Jesus gedink het. Dit word moontlik as ons vervul word met dieselfde Heilige Gees wat ook in Hom woon. *"...want dit is God wat in julle werk om te wil sowel as om te werk na sy welbehae"* (Filippense 2:13).

DIÉ WAT REEDS lS, EN DIÉ WAT NOG NIE IS NIE

Sommige Bybelkundiges wat die verwagtinge van diegene wat voor die koms van Christus geleef het, bespreek, gebruik 'n kragtige illustrasie om te wys hoe hulle die invloed van die Messias se koms en die vestiging van die nuwe koninkryk gesien het. Hulle trek twee sirkels langs mekaar. Die een aan die linkerkant simboliseer die ou wêreld. Die een aan die regterkant simboliseer die wêreld wat nog moes kom. Tussenin sou daar dan 'n ingrypende gebeurtenis plaasvind, naamlik die koms van die Messias.

Die perspektief van mense uit die antieke tyd was dat die koms van die Messias tot 'n heel nuwe orde van dinge sou lei. Die ou wêreld sou verdwyn en in sy plek sou daar 'n splinternuwe wêreld kom.

Dié van ons wat aan hierdie kant van die Nuwe Testament leef, weet dat die illustrasie verander moet word om volgens die Bybel korrek te wees. Die twee sirkels verteenwoordig nog steeds die ou wêreld en die nuwe wêreld, maar hulle moenie langs mekaar getrek word nie - hulle moet mekaar oorvleuel. En die gedeelte waar hulle mekaar oorvleuel, is die deel waarin die koninkryk van God nou reeds bestaan. Koninkryksburgers is nog steeds deel van die ou wêreld, maar hulle is eweneens deel van die nuwe wêreld.

Dit is die aard van die koninkryk wat met bloed gekoop is. Dit is enersyds 'n realiteit. En andersyds is dit 'n toekomstige koninkryk wat nog nie ten volle tot stand gebring is nie.

Sedert Jesus se dood aan die kruis, toe Hy met Sy offerbloed die prys vir die sonde betaal het, is die vyand reeds verslaan. Die koninkryk is dus by Golgota ingestel. Dit is 'n oorwinningsryk, want Jesus self het daarvan gesê: *"Ek het die Satan soos 'n bliksem uit die hemel sien val"* (Lukas 10:18). Die Satan se mag is vernietig en sy lot is reeds verseël.

Hoewel dit alles waar is, weet ons ook dat die Satan nog nie wil erken dat hy verslaan is nie. Hoewel die angel uit sy mag verwyder is, sal die stryd tussen goed en kwaad voortduur totdat die koninkryk finaal gevestig word.

Aan die einde van die tyd en die begin van die ewigheid sal die groot loflied die lied van die bloed en die loflied aan die Lam wees (verwys Openbaring 5:12-14). Ek glo dat hierdie lied die aanhef tot die volheid van die koninkryk van God, wat deur bloed gekoop is, sal wees. Tot dan kan ons leer om soos konings en priesters voor ons hemelse Vader te leef; tot dan kan ons binne die wet van liefde leef en sy wette met gewillige harte gehoorsaam.

Chapter 13: The power of the blood Today

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

—Acts 20:28

The blood of Jesus had—and has—the power to change history, and we are part of that history. Calvary is the focal point of the ages: All the ages before it looked forward to it, and all the ages since look back at it. There, against the skyline of the history of the world, is the cross of Christ with its message of eternal significance. Its essential message is this: Man is hopelessly lost without a Savior. Christ came to earth and died once and for all to bear sin's penalty on behalf on man and give him eternal life.

The symbol of atoning blood speaks clearly and loudly. Its clarion call echoes in every generation and reaches across the centuries. It is a call on our hearts and lives. First, how will we personally respond to the offer of eternal life through the sacrifice of the Lamb? Second, how will we live in response to this precious gift and its generous and loving Giver?

THE BLOOD HAS NEVER LOST ITS POWER

In the last chapter, we talked about the "already and not yet." We in the kingdom of God are in that place where the two circles overlap. We are in the kingdom, but we are also in the world. The covenant people of God, manifested in the church, are called to bring the message of redemption and deliverance through the blood to the hurting world in which we live. To this day, the blood has never lost its power. There is no limit to what Jesus' blood has accomplished and what it will accomplish as we live out our covenant relationship with God as His people—His church.

THE COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE WORLD

The church is a precious creation of God. The blood-purchased people who belong to Him and do His work in the world have a specific mission entrusted to them.

WELCOMING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The church can never accomplish the work of the Spirit by human ability alone. Its only hope is to seek and welcome the abiding presence of God. Describing the reality of this aspect of the church's mission, Ephesians 2:20-22 says,

[You,] *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

The highest calling of the called-out ones is to worship our God. He is worthy to be praised and extolled, His name lifted up as a testimony of His power and goodness. While the people of God in the Old Testament gathered to offer sacrifice, New Testament believers understand that the One Sacrifice has been offered, and they come together to celebrate the name of the One who shed His blood for our salvation.

The church, rightly functioning, is a place for God to dwell among His people.

PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

As the covenant people of God, the church pleases God and ministers effectively in the world when it faithfully conveys the message that Christ has entrusted to it. This message is multifaceted and reflects both the words and example of Christ while He was here on earth.

Jesus cursed a fig tree because it failed to produce the fruit He expected of it. (See Matthew 21:19.) A church that fails to evangelize is like a fruitless tree that wastes the ground it is on or an abandoned house with *Ichabod ("the glory has departed,"* 1 Samuel 4:21) written over its doors. Christ shed His precious blood that all men might be saved, but if the church does not tell men and women what He has

done, it is fruitless.

It must break the heart of the Father to see a church doing everything else except what He has commissioned as its great work. We are God's redeemed people, and we have a responsibility to identify with and proclaim the truth of Jesus' great sacrifice. We must proclaim the one perfect Sacrifice who shed His blood to cleanse humanity of sin.

BRINGING GLORY TO GOD

One of the primary tasks of God's people is to bring Him glory. We do this by telling of God's revelation, recounting His mighty acts of power, and continually praising His name. Ephesians 3:20-21 counsels us to glorify Him in these words:

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Making Known the Manifold Wisdom of God

Man has always tried to figure out a way to arrange for his own salvation, but the judgment of God about man's attempts is succinctly expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:21:

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

The world looks at the message of the gospel and declares it foolish. The idea of the blood of the Lamb having saving efficacy is thought to be insane by some. Yet the church itself is meant to be a manifestation of the wonderful wisdom of God demonstrated through the cross. Ephesians 3:10 says it this way: *"To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."* Paul knew that through the preaching of the gospel, that wisdom is revealed. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"* (Romans 1:16).

The good news of the gospel is that the blood avails for the redemption of the whole world and can be applied to any individual who hears the message and responds in repentance and love. The loving task of the church is to take the message of justification to all

the world. *"By Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Colossians 1:20). We are called and commissioned to proclaim the good news and urge men and women to accept it.

The work of evangelism is generally fulfilled through preaching the Word, sharing personal testimony, sending missionaries, and utilizing media. Like Paul, we are to become all things to all men that by all means we might win some. (See 1 Corinthians 9:22.)

EDIFYING ITS MEMBERS

To edify means to build up, to grow. In its work of global outreach, the church must not neglect its own. The members of the body itself must not be overlooked or forgotten. They must be wrapped in loving fellowship and carefully nurtured by the Word for growth and Christian development. *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

I am more and more convinced, as I have become persuaded of the power of the blood to save, sanctify, and seal, that the great hope of the church to spread the message of the power of the blood is for God's people to be trained, prepared, and taught for this vital work.

As the church develops men and women to share the message of the gospel, at the same time the members themselves are growing in spiritual power and grace. This is God's plan for His blood-bought people.

When the church is faithfully putting forth the Word of God, something happens to its members: They grow up to become more and more like Christ:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:11-13)

DISCIPLINING ITS MEMBERS

A passage in Revelation describes a church so displeasing to God that He says

He will "spit it out of His mouth." (See Revelation 3:16 NIV.) God has a high expectation for His blood-bought sons and daughters. One of His expectations is that erring members will be corrected and disciplined. Jesus described the way in which this should be done:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.
(Matthew 18:15-17)

CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED

Jesus described the focus of His ministry using the passage in Isaiah that talks about visible, viable ministry to people. He inaugurated His public ministry by quoting Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

His own ministry was marked by feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting the grieving, and causing the poor to rejoice. His called-out people can do no less. The Bible asks us,

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works, is dead.
(James 2:15-17)

There is every expectation throughout the pages of the New Testament that God's people will be interested in taking care of the needs of the less fortunate. God's people are people of care. Our caring reflects the Spirit of the One of whom it is written,

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

Living As Sanctified People

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood,

suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:12-16)

Through the blood of Christ, we have been set apart and purchased for God. He has put His laws in our minds and written them on our hearts (see Hebrew 8:10), and we are to live as those who belong to Him and have His nature.

A significant way that we can remind ourselves often that we belong to God is through the celebration of the Lord's Supper, commemorating the shedding of Christ's blood on our behalf and the new life we receive through His sacrifice.

We remember the power of the blood every time we experience the Lord's Supper and share with fellow believers the broken bread and the fruit of the vine. The power of the blood is brought close to home when we truly understand the significance of this sacrament.

At the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus expressed to His followers, *"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"* (Matthew 26:29). The church often doesn't grasp the true meaning of those words. We tend to place *"that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"* into some far- off nebulous millennial future.

As a matter of fact, the kingdom became a reality for the disciples at the cross. The very next time they partook of the Supper, they were "drinking it new in the Father's kingdom." The happy message of this truth is that when we take part in the Lord's Supper, we have the assurance of His promise that He is present with us.

I challenge you to experience the Supper not as an empty ritual that is repeated "because we always do it," but rather see it as an occasion to actually enter the divine presence. Realize that He is at the table with you. He says to us today, as He did to those early disciples, "*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"* (Luke 22:15).

With this understanding, the power of the blood will become a present reality to you. You will have the confidence to speak to Him as you share His meal. You will hear Him say something like, “It gives Me pleasure to fellowship with you. Is there anything you need? Is there anything I can help you with? What can I do to bless your life?”

When you approach the Sacrament in this intimate manner, realizing that He has desired to share this time with you, it will not be a historic symbol of a long-ago ritual but it will be a present-day manifestation of communion with God and the experience of His power—the power of the blood.

Therefore, when you go to communion, remember what God has done to wash your sins away, redeem you, heal you, and give you joy on this earth. Every blessing you enjoy is through the blood of the Lamb.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

I am overwhelmed with joy and pleasure when I think of the great love Christ has for the church and the glorious future He has prepared for it. Remember, it is the *"church of God which He purchased with His own blood"* (Acts 20:28). It is the church *"Christ.. .loved.. .and gave Himself for"* (Ephesians 5:25).

The prophet Malachi recorded these words of our heavenly Father:

"They shall be Mine," says the Lord *of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."*

(Malachi 3:17)

The sons and daughters of the church have a present and future hope, and perhaps no one expressed it better than Titus:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

(Titus 2:11-13)

Not only do we enjoy a high standard of holy living that pleases the Father in this present world, but we also have a blessed hope for the future. We're not sure of all the details of that future because much of its glories are hidden from our finite understanding. Some truths, however, are wonderfully clear and give us cause for rejoicing. For example, as John explained it,

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2)

Sons and daughters of the church should realize that this future day of rejoicing when we will see Him *"face to face"* (1 Corinthians 13:12) is also depicted in the book of Revelation and other passages that reveal the coming day of victory:

After these things Í looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(Revelation 7:9-10)

Then, at last, the Lamb of God will come into our clear view. The precious One whose blood was shed, the blood that made our salvation possible, will rejoice in the glory that is due Him. His people will gather before Him in a great paean of praise. All of heaven will resound with cries of praise and hallelujah.

The Lamb—He who was slain from the foundation of the world, He who was shamefully treated by heartless mobs, He whose sacrifice of blood was ignored by thoughtless millions—the One altogether lovely and worthy will at last be acknowledged by a grateful covenant people who will rejoice in His presence and look forward to eternity never separated from Him again.

Hoofstuk 13: Die krag van die bloed vandag

"Gee dan ag op julleself en op die hele kudde waaroor die Heilige Gees julle as opsieners aangestel het om as herders die gemeente van God te versorg, wat Hy deur Sy eie bloed verkry het"
- Handelinge 20:28

Die bloed van Jesus het die krag om die geskiedenis te verander - en ons is deel van die geskiedenis.

Golgota is die fokuspunt van alle eeue: al die eeue vóór Golgota het daarheen gewys en al die eeue daarná kyk terug daarna. Daar, teen die horison van die wêreld, is die kruis van Christus met sy boodskap van ewige belang. Die kernboodskap van die kruis is dít: die mens is hopeloos verlore sonder 'n Verlosser. Christus het na die wêreld toe gekom en eenmaal gesterf sodat Hy eens en vir altyd die prys vir die sonde namens die mens kon dra en vir hom die ewige lewe kon gee.

Die simbool van die versoeningsbloed praat hard en duidelik. Die wekroep van die bloed klink helder oor alle eeue en geslagte heen. Dit doen 'n beroep op ons harte en lewens. Hoe gaan ons persoonlik reageer op die aanbod van ewige lewe deur die offer van die Lam? En hoe gaan ons leef in reaksie op hierdie kosbare geskenk en die liefdevolle Gewer daarvan?

DIE KRAG VAN DIE BLOED IS NOG NET SO STERK

Ons het in die vorige hoofstuk gekyk na "dié wat reeds is en
dié wat nog nie is nie." Ons wat in die koninkryk van God is, is op daardie plek waar die twee sirkels oorvleuel. Ons is in die koninkryk, maar ons is ook in die wêreld. Die verbondsvolk van God - die kerk - word geroep om die boodskap van ver- lossing en bevryding deur die bloed te bring aan hierdie wêreld wat in soveel pyn verkeer. En die

krag van die bloed is vandag nog net so sterk. Daar is geen perk aan wat Jesus se bloed bereik het en sal bereik as ons as kerk van God ons ver- bondsverhouding met Hom gaan uitleef nie.

GOD SE VERBONDSVOLK IN DIE WÊRELD

Die kerk is 'n kosbare skepping van God. Die mense wat aan Hom behoort en met bloed gekoop is, het 'n baie spesifieke taak hier op aarde.

VERWELKOM GOD SE TEENWOORDIGHEID

Die kerk kan nooit die werk van die Gees deur menslike werk alleen vermag nie. Daarom lê die kerk se enigste hoop daarin om God se teenwoordigheid te verwelkom. Efésiërs 2:20-22 beskryf hierdie aspek van die kerk se taak só:

(Julle is) "gebou op die fondament van die apostels en profete, ter- wyl Jesus Christus self die hoeksteen is, in wie die hele gebou, goed saamgevoeg, verrys tot 'n heilige tempel in die Here, in wie julle ook sal opgebou word tot 'n woning van God in die Gees" (Efésiërs 2:20-22).

Die hoogste roeping van dié wat deur God geroep is, is om ons God te aanbid. Hy is ons lofprysing en aanbidding waardig en ons moet Sy Naam ophef en van Sy almag en goedheid getuig. Waar God se volk in die Ou Testament saamgekom het om te offer, verstaan die Nuwe-Testamentiese gelowiges dat die Een Offer reeds gebring is en kom ons saam om die Een wat Sy bloed vir ons verlossing gestort het, te vier.

Die kerk is 'n plek waar God onder Sy mense behoort te woon.

VERKONDIG CHRISTUS SE BOODSKAP

As die verbondsvolk van God verbly die kerk God se hart en slaag dit in sy bediening in die wêreld as die boodskap van Christus getrou deur die kerk verkondig word. Hierdie boodskap het baie fasette en sal nie net Christus se woorde nie, maar ook sy lewe hier op aarde weerspieël.

Jesus het 'n vyeboom vervloek omdat dit nie vrugte gedra het nie (verwys Matthéus 21:19). 'n Kerk wat nie die evangelie uitdra nie, is soos 'n boom sonder vrugte of 'n verlate huis waarvan ons sou kon sê "*Ikabod*" - "*weggevoer is die eer*" (1 Samuel 4:21). Christus het sy kosbare bloed gestort sodat alle mense gered kan word, maar as die kerk nie vir die mense ver- tel wat Hy gedoen het nie, dan dra dit geen vrug nie.

Ek is seker dit breek die Vader se hart om 'n kerk te sien wat allerhande ander dinge doen maar nie uitkom by wat hy as die groot opdrag vir sy volgelinge gegee het nie. Ons is God se verloste volk en ons het 'n verantwoordelikheid om met Jesus se groot offer te identifiseer en dit te verkondig. Ons moet die volmaakte Offer wat Sy bloed gestort het om die mensdom van sonde te red, verkondig.

BRING EER AAN GOD

Een van die primêre take van God se volk is om aan Hom eer te bring. Ons doen dit deur van Sy openbaring te vertel, oor Sy magtige dade te praat en Sy Naam te prys. Efésiërs 3:20-21 sê dat ons Hom só moet loof:

"En aan Hom wat mag het om te doen ver bo alles wat ons bid of dink, volgens die krag wat in ons werk, aan Hom die heerlikheid in die gemeente in Christus Jesus deur alle geslagte tot in ewigheid! Amen."

VERKONDIG DIE WYSHEID VAN GOD

Die mens het nog altyd probeer om sy eie verlossing te bewerkstellig, maar ons lees in 1 Korinthiërs 1:21 wat God daarvan sê:

"Want aangesien in die wysheid van God die wêreld deur die wysheid God nie geken het nie, het dit God behaag om deur die dwaasheid van die prediking die wat glo, te red..."

In die oë van die wêreld is die evangelie dwaasheid. Sommige mense dink dat die idee van die bloed van die Lam absoluut malligheid is. En tog is die kerk self 'n manifestering van die wonderlike wysheid van God deur die kruis. Efésiërs 3:10 stel dit só: *"...sodat nou deur die gemeente aan die owerhede en magte in die hemele die menigvuldige wysheid van God bekend gemaak kan word."* Paulus het geweet dat wysheid deur die verkondiging van die evangelie geopenbaar sou word. *"Want ek skaam my nie oor die evangelie van Christus nie, want dit is 'n krag van God tot redding vir elkeen wat glo"* (Romeine 1:16).

Die goeie nuus van die evangelie is dat die bloed vir die verlossing van die hele wêreld geld en toegepas kan word op enige individu wat die boodskap hoor en met liefde sy son- des voor God bely. Dit is die kerk se liefdevolle taak om die boodskap van regverdigmaking na die hele wêreld toe uit te dra. *"...en dat hy deur Hom alles met Homself sou versoen nadat Hy vrede gemaak het deur die bloed van Sy kruis - ek sê deur Hom - die dinge op die aarde sowel as die dinge in die hemele"* (Kolossense 1:20). Ons word geroep en beveel om die goeie nuus te verkondig en mense aan te moedig om dit te aanvaar.

Evangelisasiewerk word gedoen deur die Woord te ver- kondig, deur persoonlik te getuig, deur sendelinge uit te stuur en ook deur die media te gebruik. Soos Paulus, moet ons alle dinge vir alle mense word sodat ons sommiges vir God kan wen (verwys 1 Korinthiërs 9:22).

BOU ANDER OP

Die kerk mag nooit só besig raak om uit te beweeg dat sy eie mense verwaarloos word nie. Die lede van die liggaam mag nie oorgesien of vergeet word nie. Daar moet in liefde- volle gemeenskap na hulle omgesien word. Hulle moet opgebou en deur die Woord gevoed word. *"Maar as ons in die lig wandel soos Hy in die lig is, dan het ons*

gemeenskap met mekaar; en die bloed van Jesus Christus, Sy Seun, reinig ons van alle sonde" (1 Johannes 1:7).

Hoe meer oortuig ek raak dat die bloed krag het om te red, te heilig en te beseël, hoe meer oortuig is ek ook dat kerk slegs die boodskap van die krag van die bloed effektief sal kan uitdra as die kinders van God vir hierdie grootse taak opgelei word en daarop voorbereid is.

Terwyl die kerk manne en vroue ontwikkel om die evangelieboodskap uit te dra, groei daardie manne en vroue in geestelike krag en genade. Dit is God se plan vir Sy kinders wat met Sy bloed gekoop is.

As die kerk getrou die Woord van God uitdra, gebeur daar ook iets met sy lidmate: hulle word al hoe meer en meer soos Christus:
"En Hy het gegee sommige as apostels, ander as profete, ander as evangeliste, ander as herders en leraars, om die heiliges toe te rus vir hulle dienswerk, tot opbouing van die liggaam van Christus, totdat ons almal kom tot die eenheid van die geloof en van die kennis van die Seun van God, tot 'n volwasse man, tot die mate van die volle grootte van Christus" (Efésiërs 4:11- 13).

DISSIPLINE IN DIE KERK

Ons lees in Openbaring van 'n kerk wat die Here só teleurstel dat Hy sê hy sal hulle uit Sy *"mond spuug"* (Openbaring 3:16). God het hoë verwagtinge van Sy seuns en dogters wat met die bloed van Jesus gekoop is. Een van Sy verwagtinge is dat lidmate wat dwaal, reggehelp en vermaan sal word. Jesus het gesê hoe dit gedoen moet word:
“En as jou broeder teen jou sondig, gaan bestraf hom tussen jou en hom alleen. As hy na jou luister, dan het jy jou broeder gewin; maar as hy nie luister nie, neem nog een of twee met jou saam, so- dat in die mond van twee of drie getuies elke woord kan vasstaan. En as hy na hulle nie luister nie, sê dit aan die gemeente; en as hy na die gemeente ook nie luister nie, laat hom vir jou wees soos die heiden en die tollenaar" (Matthéus 18:15-17).

VERSORGING VAN DIÉ WAT IN NOOD VERKEER

Jesus het na hierdie sigbare deel van die bediening verwys deur 'n gedeelte uit die profeet Jesaja se boek aan te haal.
"Die Gees van die Here is op My, omdat Hy My gesalf het om die evangelie aan die armes te bring. Hy het My gestuur om die wat verbryseld van hart is, te genees; om aan gevangenes vrylating te verkondig en aan blindes herstel van gesig; om die wat gebroke is, in vryheid weg te stuur; om die aangename jaar van die Here aan te kondig" (Lukas 4:18-19).
Jesus se bediening is gekenmerk deurdat Hy hongeres kosgegee het,

siekes genees het, bedroefdes getroos het en armes laat jubel het. Sy geroepenes mag niks minder as dit doen nie. Die Bybel vra vir ons:
"As daar nou 'n broeder of suster naak is en aan die daaglikse voedsel gebrek het, en een uit julle sou vir hulle sê: Gaan heen in vrede, word warm, word versadig, maar julle gee hulle nie wat vir die liggaam nodig is nie - wat baat dit? Net so is ook die geloof, as dit geen werke het nie, in sigself dood" (Jakobus 2:15-17).
Daar is 'n duidelike verwagting in die Nuwe Testament dat God se kinders in die behoeftes van dié wat dit nodig het, sal voorsien. God se kinders is mense wat omgee. Ons weerspieël die Gees van die Een van wie daar geskryf is:
"...hoeveel te meer sal die bloed van Christus, wat Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer het, julle gewete reinig van dooie werke om die lewende God te dien" (Hebreërs 9:14).

LEWE SOOS GEHEILIGDE MENSE
"Daarom het Jesus ook, om die volk deur Sy eie bloed te heilig, buitekant die poort gely. Laat ons dan uitgaan na Hom toe buitekant die laer en Sy smaad dra. Want ons het hier geen blywende stad nie, maar ons soek die toekomstige. Laat ons dan gedurig deur Hom aan God 'n lofoffer bring, dit is die vrug van die lippe wat Sy Naam bely. Vergeet die weldadigheid en mededeelsaamheid nie, want God het 'n welbehae aan sulke offers" (Hebreërs 13:12-16).
Ons is deur die bloed van Christus vir God gekoop en af- gesonder. Hy het Sy wette in ons gedagtes geëts en hulle op ons harte geskryf (verwys Hebreërs 8:10) en ons moet leef soos mense wat aan Hom behoort en wat Sy natuur het.

'n Belangrike manier waarop ons onsself dikwels daaraan kan herinner dat ons aan God behoort, is deur die Nagmaal te vier - deur dit te vier dat Christus Sy bloed gestort het sodat ons die nuwe lewe deelagtig kan word.

Ons onthou die krag van die bloed elke keer as ons die Nagmaal geniet en die gebreekte brood en die vrug van die wynstok saam met medegelowiges eet en drink. Die krag van die bloed word tuisgebring as ons waarlik die betekenis van hierdie sakrament verstaan.

Toe Jesus die Nagmaal ingestel het, het Hy vir Sy dissipels gesê: *"Maar Ek sê vir julle: Ek sal van nou af nooit meer van hierdie vrug van die wynstok drink nie, tot op daardie dag wanneer Ek dit met julle nuut sal drink in die koninkryk van My Vader"* (Matthéus 26:29). Die kerk verstaan dikwels hierdie woorde verkeerd. Ons dink dat die woorde "daardie dag wanneer Ek dit met julle nuut sal drink in die koninkryk van My Vader" na een of ander véraf dag in die toekoms verwys.

Maar ons weet dat die koninkryk vir die dissipels by die kruis 'n werklikheid geword het. Die volgende keer toe hulle die Nagmaal

gebruik het, het hulle dit "nuut in die koninkryk van die Vader" gebruik. Die wonderlike boodskap van hierdie waarheid is dat as ons deel het aan die Nagmaal, ons ook die versekering het van Sy belofte dat Hy by ons is.

Ek wil jou uitdaag om die Nagmaal nie as 'n leë ritueel te ervaar nie, maar as 'n geleentheid om waarlik in God se teenwoordigheid in te gaan. Dink daaraan dat Hy dit saam met jou geniet. Hy sê vandag vir ons, net soos wat Hy vir sy dissipels gesê het: *"Ek het baie sterk daarna verlang om hierdie pasga met julle te eet voordat Ek ly*" (Lukas 22:15).

As jy dit verstaan, sal die krag van die bloed vir jou nog 'n sterker realiteit word. Jy sal die vrymoedigheid hê om met Hom te praat terwyl jy die Nagmaal geniet. Jy sal hoor dat Hy iets sê soos: "Dit is vir My 'n vreugde om met jou gemeenskap te hê. Is daar enigiets wat jy nodig het? Is daar enigiets waarmee Ek jou kan help? Wat kan Ek doen om jou lewe te seën?"

As jy die sakrament op hierdie intieme wyse benader en besef dat Hy graag hierdie tyd met jou wil deurbring, sal dit nie 'n historiese simbool van 'n eeue-oue ritueel wees nie, maar 'n vars manifestering van gemeenskap met God en die ervaring van Sy krag - die krag van die bloed.

As jy dus na die Nagmaal toe gaan, onthou wat God gedoen het om jou sondes weg te was, om jou te verlos, om jou te genees en vir jou vreugde hier op aarde te gee. Elke seën wat jy geniet, kom deur die bloed van die Lam.

DIE TOEKOMS VAN DIE KERK

Ek raak oorweldig met vreugde en blydskap as ek dink aan die oneindige liefde wat Christus vir die kerk het en aan die heerlike toekoms wat Hy vir sy kerk voorbestem het.

Onthou, dit is *"die gemeente van God ... wat Hy deur Sy eie bloed verkry het"* (Handelinge 20:28). Dit is die kerk wat *"Christus ... liefgehad en Homself... oorgegee het"* (Eféśiërs 5:25).

Die profeet Maleági sê die volgende oor ons hemelse Vader:

"En hulle sal My tot 'n eiendom wees, sê die Here van die leërskare, op die dag wat Ek skep, en Ek sal met hulle medelye hê soos ’n man medelye het met sy seun wat hom dien" (Maleági 3:17).

Die seuns en dogters van die kerk het 'n eietydse én 'n toekomstige hoop en daar is waarskynlik niemand wat dit beter verwoord het as Titus nie:

"Want die reddende genade van God het aan alle mense verskyn en leer ons om die goddeloosheid en wêreldse begeerlikhede te verloën, ingetoë en regverdig en vroom in die teenwoordige wêreld te lewe, terwyl ons die salige hoop en die verskyning van die heerlikheid verwag van die grote God en

ons Verlosser, Jesus Christus" (Titus 2:11-13).

Ons geniet nie net 'n hoë standaard van heiligheid wat die Vader verheug nie, maar ons het ook 'n salige hoop op die toekoms! Ons is nie seker van presies hoe daardie toekoms gaan lyk nie, want van die heerlikheid daarvan is verborge vir ons beperkte begripsvermoë. Maar sommige waarhede is heerlik duidelik en laat ons jubel. Johannes het dit byvoorbeeld só verduidelik:

"Geliefdes, nou is ons kinders van God, en dit is nog nie geopen- baar wat ons sal wees nie; maar ons weet dat ons, as Hy verskyn, aan Hom gelyk sal wees, omdat ons Hom sal sien soos Hy is" (1 Johannes 3:2).

Seuns en dogters van die kerk moet verstaan dat hierdie heerlike toekomstige dag wanneer ons Hom *"van aangesig tot aangesig"* (1 Korinthiërs 13:12) sal sien, ook in die boek Openbaring en ander Skrifgedeeltes uitgebeeld word.

"Na hierdie dinge het ek gesien, en kyk, daar was 'n groot menigte wat niemand kon tel nie, uit alle nasies en stamme en volke en tale; hulle het gestaan voor die troon en voor die Lam, bekleed met wit klere en met palmtakke in hulle hande; en hulle het met 'n groot stem geroep en gesê: Heil aan onse God wat op die troon sit, en aan die Lam!" (Openbaring 7:9-10).

Dan, uiteindelik, sal die Lam van God vir ons duidelik sig- baar word. Die kosbare Een wie se bloed gestort is, die bloed wat ons verlossing moontlik gemaak het, sal vreugde vind in die verheerliking wat Hom toekom. Sy mense sal met 'n groot loflied voor Hom verenig. Die ganse hemel sal weerklink van daardie lofliedere.

Die Lam - Hy wat van die grondlegging van die aarde af geslag is - Hy wat skandalig behandel is deur die hartelose skare, Hy wie se bloedoffer deur onverskillige miljoene geïgnoreer is - die Een wat lieflik en waardig is, sal uiteindelik deur 'n dankbare verbondsvolk erken word en hulle sal in Sy teenwoordigheid jubel en uitsien na 'n toekoms waarin hulle nooit, ooit weer van Hom geskei sal wees nie.

TESTIMONIES OF THE POWER OF THE BLOOD

A Name Written IN HEAVEN

I was fourteen years of age when I was born again through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. A young pastor, the Reverend W. G. Abney, came to Warner Robins, Georgia, to plant a new church. He rented an old army barracks and began having services.

My mother and father began attending the services and were helping to establish the church. One Sunday night the Lord convicted me of my sins and I rushed to the altar to give my life to the Lord. The saints gathered around me to pray for my salvation.

I had been praying for only a short time when suddenly I found myself, in the Spirit, climbing a steep hill. It was very steep, and I began to pull at the bushes, trying to climb up the hill. Finally, I neared the top. As I did, I looked up and suddenly saw Jesus on the cross. His blood was dripping from His hands and feet. I pulled myself over until I was under the cross. I could literally feel the warm drops of Jesus' blood flowing over my soul.

I saw a huge book open up, and my name was written in large, golden letters in the book: Thomas Lanier Lowery.

I shall never forget the peace and ecstasy that flooded my soul that night. I knew my name was written in heaven. I knew God had a record of my commitment to Him as my soul was flooded with billows of joy beyond description. Such peace and happiness and fulfillment swept over me in waves of grandeur and blessing. What a happy day that was!

I have now served God for more than sixty years, and my love for Him increases with each passing year. I have never had a single desire to look back. He has kept me through the years—leading, guiding, protecting, providing for, and sustaining my family and me. I can truly say with David of old, *"I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread"* (Psalm 37:25).

The rewarding ministry God has blessed me with has taken me around the world to preach the gospel in 115 different countries. Now, at age seventy-five, I am preparing for the next level in my ministry. I can hardly wait to see what God has in store for me!

Dr. T. L. Lowery

International Evangelist
T. L. Lowery Global Ministries

THE BLOOD CLEANSES

As a young teenage boy of only fourteen, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and realized the cleansing power of His blood. I came under deep conviction of my sins and my need for a Savior. Following a revival service one night, I could not sleep. I crawled out of my bed and began to repent of my sins. My father heard me praying and came in to pray with me.

My father had taught me that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. He assured me that confessed sins were under the blood. I rejoiced that night in the forgiveness of my sins, and I remain confident even now in the continuing, cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

James D. Leggett
General Superintendent
International Pentecostal Holiness Church

My Testimony of Conversion

I left home at age twelve and went to work on a farm. My life was taking me in a direction that was going far away from God. At that point in my life, I could not remember ever having heard anyone pray. At the age of fifteen, I was working in the fields of a cotton plantation in Mississippi County, Arkansas.

In the cotton field, I met a Church of God preacher who was, himself, picking cotton. A friendship developed between us, and he invited me to attend a meeting he was starting. I attended, and at first I stood outside and listened to the singing. Their music consisted of about a dozen different instruments; and boy, could those fellows play!

On the second night that I was there, a brother went to his car to get something and saw me standing in the shadows. He invited me inside. At first I made excuses, but he acted like he wanted me to come in, and I began to feel bad about refusing his invitation. So I went in, fully intending to leave as soon as the music and singing stopped.

When I was ready to leave, there were so many people between the door and me that I hated to disturb them by making them move. So I just waited and listened. Soon the minister asked everyone to stand while he gave the altar call for people to get saved.

I was suddenly aware that someone was standing beside me. When I glanced up, it was the preacher. He said to me, softly, “Son, wouldn’t you like to get saved?” I had no idea what he was talking about, but he was treating me so kindly and courteously that I hated to say no. I just nodded my head yes.

“Come on, then,” he said, and he led me like a child down to the altar. He said, “Just kneel down right there.” Then he went back for others. I was at the altar but didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know a single word of prayer to say. Unexpectedly, I began to cry. I didn’t know why I was crying, but I just felt like it.

About this time, two women came and knelt beside me and began to tell me things to say. One of them said to me, “Son, tell the Lord you want to be saved.” I told Him. The other said, “Tell Him if He will

save you, you will live for Him." I told Him that, too! In fact, everything they told me to say, I said. I began to mean it, and it happened that night—I was saved!

It was so wonderful; I felt so good. After a few minutes, I got up from the altar and walked over and stood against the wall, watching and listening. That was quite an experience hearing their praises and watching some of the people shout and dance. Some shouted, "Praise God!" Others said, "Hallelujah!" Still others cried out, "Glory to God!"

It sounded so good I thought I would like to try it. There was a lot of noise, so I thought that not many would hear me. I said, "Praise the Lord!" It felt so good I tried it again, this time louder. Before I hardly realized what I was doing, I was shouting loudly the praises to God that I had been hearing.

No one has been able to stop me since.

Sometimes we get discouraged because our slick formulas and down-pat cliches are not producing born-again believers; but then the power of God will fall on a sincere, repentant sinner, and we discover it still works like it has down through the ages.

I was one person when I walked down that little dirt road to the meeting that night but another person when I walked back to the place where I was staying. Jesus has now been my Savior and Lord for more than fifty- five years, and this experience gets sweeter as the days go by.

Rev. Paul H. Henson
International Evangelist

HEALED BY THE BLOOD

The night the blood became Real

I was saved through the bus ministry of a Nazarene church when I was eight years old. Because of a church split, I wound up in a Pilgrim Holiness church for a while. But when my backslidden mom and dad came back to the Lord, they wanted to attend a Pentecostal church because that was their background. We found the Church of God, and that is where we settled. I was exposed to many Sunday School classes, youth programs, and lengthy sermons. However, by the time I was called to preach in my second year of Bible college, I was still woefully ignorant of some of the cardinal doctrines of the church. One of the teachings of the Scripture that particularly fascinated yet puzzled me was the concept of the blood of Christ.

In those days, we sang a lot of songs about the blood. “There Is Power in the Blood,” “Nothing but the Blood,” “Are You Washed in the Blood?” and “When I See the Blood” are some of them. I understood that the blood could cleanse and heal but had little knowledge about the power made possible through the sufferings of Christ. As a nineteen- year-old fledgling preacher, God was about to teach me a lesson I would never forget.

A Test of faith

During that second year of my Bible college training, I made jogging a regular part of my exercise routine. With no money to buy proper jogging footwear, I didn’t realize how much I was endangering my feet as I ran on some rough, rocky trails with my thin tennis shoes. One day, on a quick run in the afternoon, I severely bruised my right heel on one of the trail stones. It was painful at the time, but I didn’t think much about it because I had developed stone bruises before and they always cleared up in a couple of weeks with no complications.

This stone bruise was different. Instead of looking better after a few days and beginning to fade in color, it appeared to be growing in size and getting brighter in color. The pain was becoming more severe, at times making my whole foot throb. However, I was busy with classes and other school activities and didn’t perceive the bruise

to be anything serious. That perception began to change as the inflammation continued to spread until it covered all of my heel. The pain began to radiate up my leg to my knee. At night, the only way I could get relief from the intense throbbing was to elevate my leg with a pillow.

Had I been at home rather than in a college dormitory, I probably would have gone to the doctor before I did. When I finally called my mom and told her about the problem, she urged me to see a doctor immediately. She didn't have to convince me further; the pain had extended to my thigh.

The doctor's first words confirmed my greatest fear. "Son," he said, "you have waited too long." He went on to tell me it was his opinion that I had a type of cancer that had spread to my upper leg and was growing rapidly. Although he couldn't say for sure without more tests, he was concerned that the only way to stop the cancer and save my life was to amputate my right leg. Needless to say, that was a heavy message for a young man already making plans for marriage and excitedly looking forward to many years of successful ministry.

For some reason, however, I had a deep peace in my heart.

A Miracle of Healing

At the same time I received the diagnosis from the doctor, God's providence had Oral Roberts come to Fresno, California, where I was living, for a healing crusade. His huge ten-thousand-seat gospel tent had been set up at the county fairgrounds, and I knew what I had to do. Without hesitation, I secured a prayer card, and on the third night, I found myself standing in a long line across the front, waiting for my time with the great healing evangelist.

When I stood before Oral Roberts and handed him my prayer card, I felt very insignificant and frightened to be the focus of attention. He paused a moment as he read the information on my card.

"So you're a young preacher and you have cancer. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you believe God is going to heal you tonight?"

"Yes, sir."

He laid his hand on my head and prayed a short prayer. I didn't feel anything spiritual. Then he asked me to take off my shoe and

stomp my right foot. As I removed my shoe, I looked down at the corrugated aluminum platform with its raised metal cleats. I knew I was in trouble. When my throbbing foot hit the metal platform, the pain was so excruciating I thought I would fly through the roof of the tent. He saw the pain on my face.

"That hurt, didn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

Then with obvious determination and compassion, he said, "We're going to pray again." When the man of God prayed the second time, immediately I felt a bolt of supernatural power surge through my body. It began at the top of my head and flowed out through my right foot. Without hesitation, I began to stomp my foot again. This time, the more I stomped it, the better it felt. I kept stomping. I stomped both feet. It was a feeling like I had never experienced.

When I realized where I was, it seemed that all ten thousand people in the tent were on their feet, shouting and praising God for the evident miracle they had just witnessed. There was no doubt in my mind; I knew God had supernaturally intervened in my life and rebuked the cancer in my body. The blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed my physical system of the cancerous cells. By His stripes I was healed!

When the blood Became Real

For the rest of that night, I was on a spiritual high. I was interviewed by a reporter from the local newspaper, and I felt a powerful anointing as I answered her questions. An overwhelming joy flowed out of me to every person I spoke with. It was quite an evening, and when I finally got to my room, I was ready to lie down on my bed and drift off to sleep. I continued to bask in the glory of God.

The moment I hit the bed, however, I knew something was wrong. As I stretched out my right leg, a sharp pain shot up into my thigh. The throbbing began again with a vengeance. Instinctively, I jumped out of bed and fell to my knees. I felt a spiritual authority well up inside of me.

"Satan, you are not going to put this cancer back on me. The blood of Jesus Christ is against you! You are defeated! The blood of Jesus prevails!" The Holy Spirit took control of my tongue and began to

rebuke the devil in another language. I didn't understand the words, but I knew exactly what the Spirit was saying.

After about thirty minutes, I got back into bed and immediately fell asleep. When I awoke in the morning, I was thoroughly refreshed and there was no pain whatsoever. Two weeks later the cancer in my heel dried up and fell out. The cavity it left soon closed over and left no trace of the evil that had threatened my life." To this day there has never been any indication of a recurrence of the cancer.

That night in my bedroom, as I battled the devil for control of my life and future, I learned once and for all the reality and power of the blood of Jesus. I have never been the same.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.[1]

Robert E. Fisher, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Center for Spiritual Renewal

When Satan oppresses

Roy Tucker, a very great pastor, described to me an encounter he had with demonic powers. It was a bizarre and terrifying experience that shows the ferocity and intensity of battling the forces of evil in spiritual warfare.

He said he first thought he was having a dream. He could feel something—it felt like a physical presence—pressing on his body. He felt weighted down, paralyzed. He could not imagine what was happening to him. He said it was as though he was screaming, but not a sound was coming out of his mouth. Roy knew an enemy from Satan had come to do something terrible to him. He knew in his spirit that this was a spiritual attack from the devil himself.

It was the middle of the night when he awoke; it was pitch dark. He could hear voices, as if someone was in the room with him, so he tried to open his eyes, but He could not. In fact, he could not move any part of his body. He tried to call out to someone for help but could not make a sound. He could not even move his lips.

The voices grew louder and louder. Soon they were close to him—right up next to him— screaming in his ears. He knew the voices belonged to evil spirits. With wild, raucous voices, they were scolding him for something he had or had not done—something that had offended them.

Then, he said, he felt his body floating upward; he was levitating from the bed. He found himself hovering against the ceiling, unable to move or speak or do anything. The screaming voices continued their relentless assault on his senses. He thought he was going mad. He actually thought he was going to die!

Gradually, his eyes opened and he could look around, but he could not do anything else. In addition to the voices, He sensed a malevolent presence in the room with him.

Because of the pressure on his chest, he had difficulty breathing. As the evil spirit tormented him, he experienced sheer terror.

Finally, he had the presence of mind to realize that he could fight

against this extreme spiritual attack of the devil. He willed himself to cry out, in his mind, “In the name of Jesus, and in the power of the blood of the Lamb, I resist the devil and all his evil spirits.” Immediately, he felt a lessening of the pressure!

Complete deliverance did not come immediately. But as he kept repeating the name of Jesus and calling on the blood of the Lamb, he became more free and more able to move and speak. By now, he could whisper, “Jesus, Jesus.” His voice grew louder and stronger, and he was liberated from the oppressive power of the enemy by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Satan, the blood of Jesus is against you!

The Transcendent Life OF AGAPE LOVE

Thanksgiving Day 1980 was family day at Grandmother’s house in Tennessee. It was a day of laughter, songs, play, and general fellowship with uncles, aunts, cousins, and extended families all coming together to form one great family. It was one of those perfect days of family interaction and reunion.

Little did we know that just thirty-six hours later a tragic phone call would come, informing us that our son, Paul Dana, and his wife, Julie, had been involved in a head-on automobile collision on the way home from the celebration.

Early in the morning in a motel room in Tennessee, I picked up the phone and heard an unknown voice from a faceless doctor say, “Your son and his wife have had an accident. Julie is seriously injured, but she will recover. Your son was killed instantly. Where do you want us to send his body?”

Only those who have experienced this shock can understand the dull ache and fear that accompany such a tragedy. In one terrible moment, the joyous closeness of Thanksgiving changed to the empty loss of death. The joy of having a firstborn son who fulfilled every expectation—he was an athlete, musician, and pastor—and brought nothing but pleasure and pride was changed to numbness. *This can’t possibly be true! Somebody tell us that this is all a big mistake!*

What do we do when tragedy strikes? We hurt. We hurt when we have to confront the tragedy of divorce. We hurt when we have to face the tragedy that our children have become drug addicts. We hurt when we deal with the tragedy of bankruptcy. We hurt when we get

the tragic news that the tumor is malignant and the prognosis is not good. We hurt when we experience the finality of a loved one's death.

But we also do something else: We turn to the deepest resources within us and draw on the rudiments of our faith to sustain us. We engage in spiritual warfare and realize that God is calling us to live the transcendent life. This is the essential meaning of faith—to become a transcender, to go beyond the limits, to step over the boundaries, to surpass the limiting factors, to rise above the hindrances, to cope with the uncontrollable, and to know that, regardless of the circumstances, *"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Romans 8:37).

In the loss of our son, my wife, Carmelita, and I learned trust in the Word of the Lord, which makes it clear that God has given us *"exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these* [we] *may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"* (2 Peter 1:4).

What are these precious promises? How may we be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? How do we "fight the fight" in the face of death?

First, we can expect God to work for good in all things. This is the universal promise of Romans 8:28. Everything that happens to us is not necessarily "good" within itself. It often hurts. Yet we know that the long-term effects of every situation blend together for a symphony of eternal good under the direction of the Father.

Second, we can expect God to finish what He has begun in our lives. This is the promise of Philippians 1:6: *"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."* One translator says, "He will put His finishing touches on you." It doesn't really matter how small or how large our faith may be. In God's mind, the plan formulated is just as good as the plan accomplished. We will someday be glorified because God completes every good work that

He begins (Philippians 3:21). This means that the ultimate goal in spiritual warfare is to live the transcendent life—regardless!

Third, expect the Spirit to make intercession when you are having problems.

Paul exclaimed in Romans 8:31, *"If God is for us, who can be against*

us?" God affirms, and He also acts on our behalf. He actually promises to give us victory in the midst of crisis. Paul declared in Romans 8:37, *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquers through Him who loved us."* Inside ourselves we have the capacity to overcome, even though we have to be resigned to the fallout of a frustrated creation, the limitations of human weakness, the sting of death, and the continuing problem of evil promoted by a secularized worldview.

Fourth, we can expect God to keep us in His love. The Scriptures say,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:35, 38-39)

This means that one of the great weapons given to us for spiritual warfare is agape love. In this regard, the only way we can learn agape love is to live the transcendent life. Agape love is the giving of self. This law of love is the supreme law of eternity. The problem is that this love has to be learned within the confines of time. Only upon this earth and in this environment can this transcendent triumph of God's love be molded in such a way that we will be qualified to administer the law of love in eternity. Billheimer makes the point that natural affection does not have to be learned. Agape love is only learned by being utterly broken, by suffering without resentment.

Once we learn this lesson of the transcendent life, the very meaning of 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 comes alive in a new and literal way:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Perhaps the transcendent life of agape love is best described in the following letter that I received from Pat Robertson, Founder and Chairman of CBN, at the time of our son's death:

Dear Paul,

I wanted you to know that I have been praying for you and your wife in your time of grief. I know that you will be surrounded by the love of thousands at this time but if there is any way that I can personally assist you other than in prayer please let me know. God must have something very special for you in the years ahead. When I thought of you, the words of the apostle Peter came to mind.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7 NASB).

We are not immune from tragedy. The good news, however, is that we can transcend our tragedies. We know that God is a God of miracles (see Hebrews 11:1-35), but God is also a God of maintenance faith (see Hebrews 11:36-40). As Hebrews 11:40 states, the transcendent life of agape love means that God has planned something better for us so that only together with us would both miracle and maintenance be made perfect.

Paul L. Walker, Ph.D.

Assistant General Overseer

Church of God International

Notes

Chapter Two

1 M. R. DeHaan, M.D., *The Chemistry of the Blood* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1943, 1981), 14.

2 <http://www.bloodcenters.org/aboutblood/ bloodfacts. htm>

3 Ibid.

4 <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/giveblood.html>

5 H. A. Maxwell Whyte, *The Power of the Blood* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1973), 17.

6 M. R. DeHaan, *The Chemistry of the Blood,* 25 (author's emphasis).

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1 Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library from Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 739- 40.

2 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary,* R. K. Harrison, Ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 1102.

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4 Ibid., 1104.

5 *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary,* 740.

6 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary,* 1106.

7 Ibid., 1107.

8 See *nasc* #H3725 and #H3724a. All footnotes marked (;\MSC) are from the *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,* © 1981 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

9 See *nasc,* #H5799.

Chapter Four

1 For a discussion of the medical aspects of scourging and crucifixion, please refer to David Terasaka, M.D., "Medical Aspects of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ" at <http://www.new-life.net/ crucifyl.htm> and <http:// www. new-life .net/ crucify2. htm >

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3 Elvina M. Hall, "I Hear the Savior Say," 1865. *CHAPTER FIVE*

1 William Walford, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," 1845. *CHAPTER SEVEN*

1 <http://www.interhack.net/projects/library/vine/T0002350.html#T0002356>

2 Robert Lowry, “What Can Wash Away My Sin?” 1876.

3 William Cowper, “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood,” 1771.

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1 Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary,* R. K. Harrison, Ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 1102.

Chapter Eleven

1 St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena,* trans. Algar Thorold (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1991).

Testimonies of the Power of the blood

1 Robert Lowry, “What Can Wash Away My Sin?” 1876.

About the Author

Mary Kathryn Baxter was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. While she was still young, her mother taught her about Jesus Christ and His salvation.

Mary was born again at the age of nineteen. After serving the Lord for several years, she backslid for a season. However, the Spirit of the Lord would not release her, and she gave her life anew to Christ. She still serves Him faithfully.

In the mid-1960s, Mary moved with her family to Detroit, Michigan, where she lived for a time. She later moved to Belleville, Michigan, where she began to have visions from God.

In 1976, while she was still living in Belleville, Jesus appeared to her in human form, in dreams, in visions, and in revelations. Since that time, she has received many visitations from the Lord. During those visits, He has shown her the depths, degrees, levels, and torments of lost souls in hell. She has also received many visions of heaven, angels, and the end of time.

During one period of her life, Jesus appeared to her each night for forty nights. He revealed to her the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven, telling her that this message is for the whole world.

Ministers, leaders, and saints of the Lord speak very highly of Mary and her ministry. The movement of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in all her services, and many miracles have occurred in them. The gifts of the Holy Spirit with demonstrations of power are manifested in her meetings as the Spirit of God leads and empowers her. She loves the Lord with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength and desires above all else to be a soulwinner for Jesus Christ.

She is truly a dedicated handmaiden of the Lord. Her calling is specifically in the area of dreams, visions, and revelations. She was ordained as a minister in 1983 at the Full Gospel Church of God in Taylor, Michigan. She now ministers with the National Church of God in Washington, D.C.

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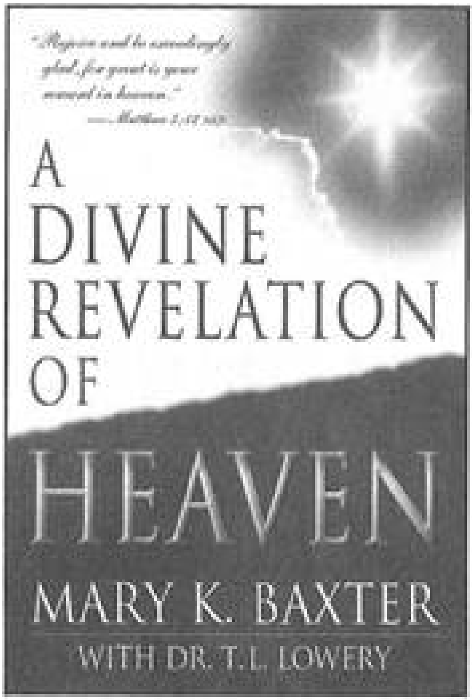
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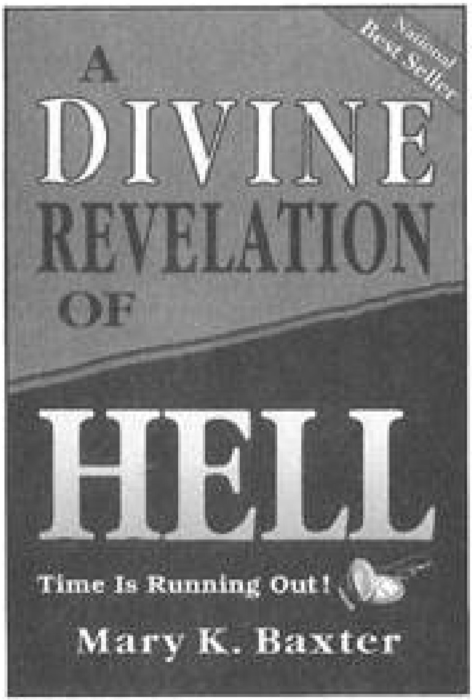
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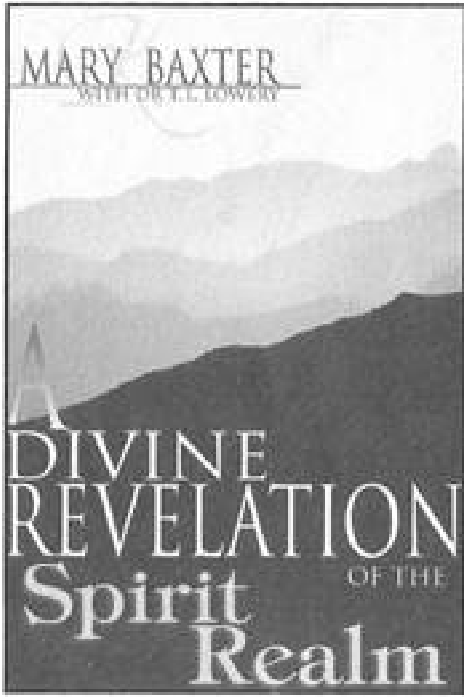
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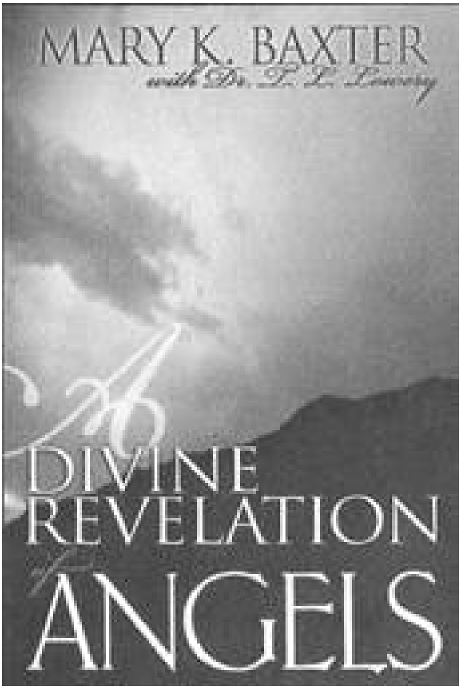
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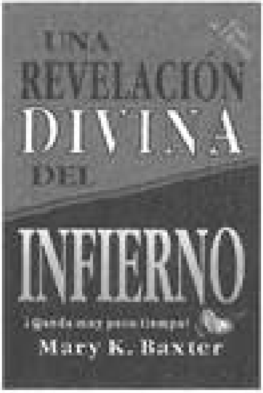
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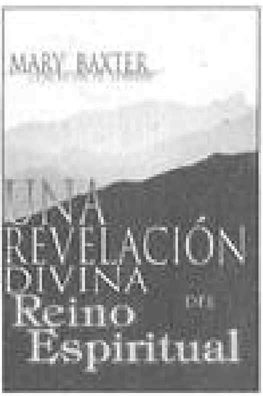
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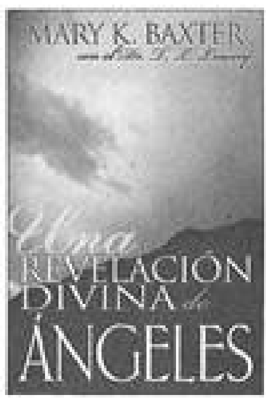
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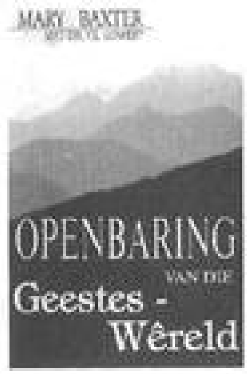
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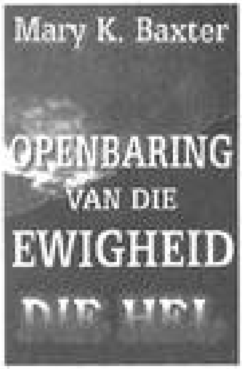
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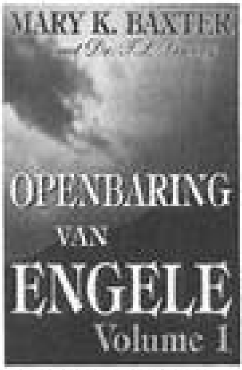


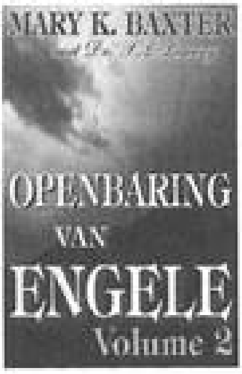
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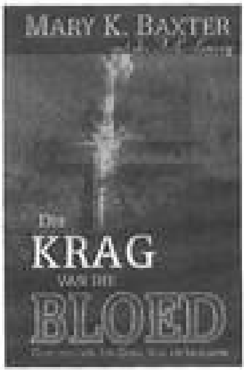


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